Film Quarterly

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Fall 1989

Yoko Ono: Ideas on Film (Interview/Scripts) • Sound and Image: A Further Hearing • Fellini: Changing the Subject • Marco Bellocchio on *Sabbath* • *The Big Parade*

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Cover (top) Federico Fellini. (bottom) Yoko Ono during the filming of *No. 4 (Bottoms)*, with her then husband Anthony Cox. [Photo courtesy Lenono Photo Archive, as are all illustrations in the Ono feature.]

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Views expressed in signed articles are the authors'.

Scott MacDonald

Yoko Ono: Ideas on Film

Interview/Scripts

Yoko Ono's relationship and partnership with John Lennon have given her access and opportunities she might never have achieved on her own, but her status as pop icon has largely obscured her own achievements as an artist. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the area of film-making. Between 1966 and 1971, Ono made substantial contributions to avant-garde cinema, most of which are now a vague memory, even for those generally cognizant of developments in this field. With a few exceptions, her films have been out of circulation for years, but fortunately this situation seems to be changing: in the spring of 1989 the Whitney Museum of American Arts presented a film retrospective (curated by John G. Hanhardt, assisted by Lucinda Furlong and Matthew Yokobosky) along with a small show of objects—1980s versions of conceptual objects Ono had exhibited in 1966 and 1967—and the American Federation of Arts plans to re-release Ono's films in the spring of 1990.[1]

Except as a film-goer, Ono was not involved with film until the 1960s, though by the time she began to make her own films, she was an established artist. At the end of the 1950s, after studying poetry and music at Sarah Lawrence College, she became part of a circle of avant-garde musicians (including John Cage and Merce Cunningham): in fact the "Chambers Street Series," a seminal concert series organized by LaMonte Young, was held at Ono's loft at 112 Chambers.[2] Ono's activities in music led to her first public concert, *A Grapefruit in the World of Park* (at the Vil-

Editing *Rape* in 1969: Yoko Ono, Eva Majlata, John Lennon, Nic Knowland

lage Gate, 1961) and later that same year to an evening of performance events at Carnegie Hall, including *A Piece for Strawberries and Violins* in which Yvonne Rainer (now a leading avant-garde film-maker) stood up and sat down before a table stacked with dishes for ten minutes, then smashed the dishes "accompanied by a rhythmic background of repeated syllables, a tape recording of moans and words spoken backwards, and by an aria of high-pitched wails sung by Ono.[3]

In the early 1960s Ono was part of what became known as Fluxus, an art movement with roots in Dada, in Marcel Duchamp and John Cage, and energized by George Maciunas. The Fluxus artists were dedicated to challenging conventional definitions in the fine arts, and conventional relationships between artwork and viewer. In the early 1960s, Ono made such works as *Painting to See the Room Through* (1961), a canvas with an almost invisible hole in the center through which one peered to see the room, and *Painting to Hammer a Nail In* (1961), a white wood panel that "viewers" were instructed to hammer nails into with an attached hammer. Instructions for dozens of these early pieces, and for later ones, are reprinted in Ono's *Grapefruit*, which has appeared several times in several different editions—most recently in a Simon and Schuster Touchstone paperback edition, reprinted in 1979.

By 1966, Ono had become interested in film, first in connection with Fluxus. She contributed three films to the *Fluxfilm Program* coordinated by Maciunas in 1966: two one-shot films shot at 2000 frames/second, *Eyeblink* and *Match*, and *No. 4*, a sequence of buttocks of walking males and females (part of the *Fluxfilm Program*, including *Eyeblink* and *No. 4*, is available through Filmmakers' Cooperative in New York).[4] Along with several other films in the *Fluxfilm Program* (and two 1966 films by Bruce Baillie), *Eyeblink* and *No. 4* are, so far as I know, the first instances of what was to become an interesting mini-genre of avant-garde cinema: the single-shot film (films which are or appear to be precisely one shot long).[5] *No. 4* is interesting primarily as a sketch for her first long film, *No. 4 (Bottoms)* (1966). By the end of 1966 Ono was beginning to instigate substantial film projects, a number of which were based on "film scripts" she had written earlier (a few of these had been published in *Grapefruit*; others are published here for the first time).

No. 4 (Bottoms) remains one of the most interesting—perhaps *the* most interesting—film Ono has made. For 80 minutes all we see are human buttocks in the act of walking, filmed in black and white, in close-up, so that each buttocks fills the screen: the crack between the cheeks and the crease between hams and legs divide the frame into four approximately equal sectors; we cannot see around the edges of the walking bodies. Each buttocks is filmed for a few seconds (often for fifteen seconds or so; sometimes for less than ten seconds), and is then followed immediately by the next buttocks. The sound track consists of interviews with people whose buttocks we see and with other people considering whether to allow themselves to be filmed; they

talk about the project in general, and they raise the issue of the film's probable boredom, which becomes a comment on viewers' actual experience of the film. The sound track also includes segments of TV news coverage of the project (which had considerable visibility in London in 1966), including an interview with Ono who indicates the general conceptual design of the film—she estimates there are 365 bottoms filmed for 15 seconds each—and explains that the bottom is "the most defenseless part of the body" and that therefore by participating in her film, people were "showing faith to the world" and, presumably, working to remove boundaries between people. Later, in an essay published in *Film Culture* (Winter/Spring 1970, p.32) and reprinted in *Grapefruit*, she called participants in the film "saints of our time," and predicted that in ten centuries people who see her film will see that the 1960s was "not only the age of achievements, but of laughter. This film, in fact, is like an aimless petition signed by people with their anuses."

In the mid-1960s, *No. 4 (Bottoms)* seemed the epitome of outrageousness, of Marshall McLuhan's definition of art as "anything you can get away with." To see it in 1989 is, however, a good bit more than an hour's worth of sixties nostalgia. *No. 4 (Bottoms)* is fascinating to watch and entertaining to listen to; it is a film that works on a variety of levels. For me its most exhilarating dimension is what it reveals about the human body. Because Ono's structuring of the visuals is rigorously serial, *No. 4 (Bottoms)* is reminiscent of Muybridge's motion studies, though in this instance the "grid" against which we measure the motion is temporal, as well as implicitly spatial: though there's no literal grid behind the bottoms, each bottom is framed in precisely the same way. What we realize from seeing these bottoms, and inevitably comparing them with one another—and with our idea of "bottom" —is both obvious and startling. Not only are people's bottoms remarkably varied in their shape, coloring, and texture, but no two bottoms move in the same way. And most surprisingly (for me), none of the hundreds of buttocks we see is a precisely "correct" bottom as "bottom" is defined by the fashion and advertising industries and by conventional film and television. For me, watching *No. 4 (Bottoms)* was a release from self-consciousness; it was as if I realized, for the first time, that my bottom is OK and so is yours —that bottoms are just bottoms, usually a little droopy, often hairy or lined, sometimes blemished . . . but endlessly distinctive and entertaining.

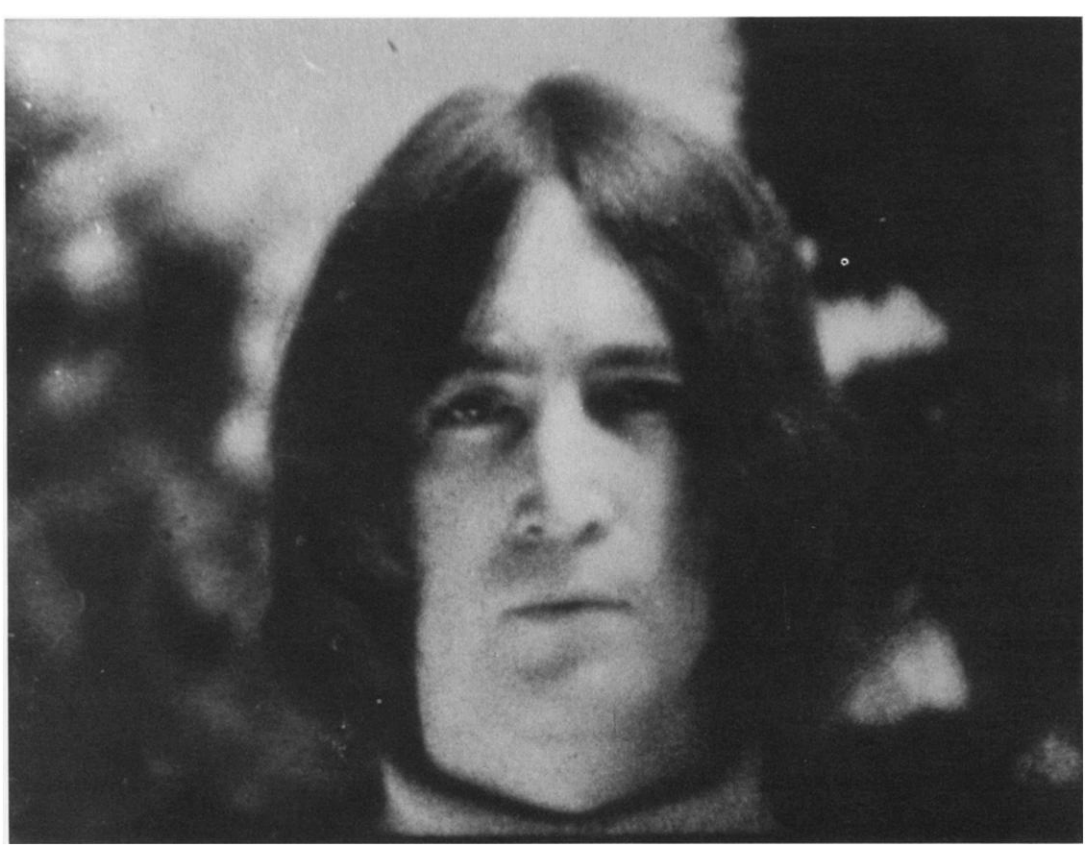
On a more formal level *No. 4 (Bottoms)* is interesting both as an early instance of the serial structuring that was to become so common in avant-garde film by the end of the 1960s (in Michael Snow's *Wavelength* and Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity*, Hollis Frampton's *Zorns Lemma*, Robert Huot's *Rolls: 1971*, J. J. Murphy's *Print Generation* . . .) and because Ono's editing makes the experience of *No. 4 (Bottoms)* more complex than simple descriptions of the film seem to suggest. As the film develops, particular bottoms and comments on the sound track are sometimes repeated, often in new contexts; and a variety of subtle interconnections between image and sound occur.

Like *No. 4 (Bottoms)*, Ono's next long film, *Film No. 5 (Smile)* (1968, 51 minutes), was an extension of work included in the *Fluxfilm Program*. Like her *Eyeblink* and *Match*—and like Chieko Shiomi's *Disappearing Music for Face* (in which Ono's smile gradually "disappears"), also on the *Fluxfilm Program—Film No. 5 (Smile)* was shot with a high-speed camera. Unlike these earlier films, all of which filmed simple actions in black and white, indoors, at 2000 frames per second, *Film No. 5 (Smile)* reveals John Lennon's face, recorded at 333 frames per second for an extended duration, outdoors, in color, and accompanied by a sound track of outdoor sounds recorded at the same time the imagery was recorded. *Film No. 5 (Smile)* divides roughly into two halves, one continuous shot each. During the first half, the film is a meditation on Lennon's face, which is so still that on first viewing I wasn't entirely sure for a while that the film was live action and not an optically printed photograph of Lennon smiling slightly. Though almost nothing happens in any conventional sense, however, the intersection of the high speed filming and our extended gaze creates continuous, subtle transformations: it is as if we can see Lennon's expression evolve in conjunction with the flow of his thoughts. Well into the first shot, Lennon forms his lips into an "O"—a kiss perhaps —and then slowly returns to the slight smile with which the shot opens. Near the end of the first shot something flies through the image (either a tiny bug

in the foreground or a bird in the background, I'm not sure) and its velocity is so much faster than other developments in the shot that it creates a funny, startling mini-drama. During the second shot of *Film No. 5 (Smile)*, which differs from the first in subtleties of color and texture (both shots are lovely), Lennon's face is more active: he blinks several times, sticks his tongue out, smiles broadly twice, and seems to say "Ah!" Of course, while the second shot is more active than the first, the amount of activity remains minimal by conventional standards (and unusually so even for avant-garde film). It is as though those of us in the theater and Lennon are meditating on each other from opposite sides of the cinematic apparatus, joined together by Ono in a lovely, hypnotic stasis.

The excitement Ono and Lennon were discovering living and working together fueled *Two Virgins* (1968) and *Bed-In* (1969), both of which were collaborations. *Two Virgins* enacts two metaphors for the two artists' interaction. First, we see a long passage of Ono's and Lennon's faces superimposed, often with a third layer of leaves, sky, and water; then we see an extended shot of Ono and Lennon looking at each other, then kissing. *Bed-In* is a relatively conventional record of the Montreal performance; it includes a number of remarkable moments, most noteworthy among them, perhaps, Al Capp's blatantly mean-spirited, passive-aggressive visit, and the song "Give Peace a Chance." Nearly all of Ono's remaining films were collaborations with John Lennon.

When the Whitney Museum presented Ono's films at its 1989 retrospective, *Rape* provoked the most extensive critical commentary. The relentless 77-minute feature elaborates the single action of a small film-making crew coming upon a woman in a London park and following her through the park, along streets and into her apartment where she becomes increasingly isolated by these cinematic tormentors. (Her isolation is a theme from the beginning since the woman speaks German; because the film isn't subtitled, even *we* don't know what she's saying in any detail.) The film was, ac-



Lennon's face in *Smile* (1968)

Filming of *Rape* (1969). Camera: Nic Knowland. Actress: Eva Majlata. Sound: Christian Wangler.

cording to Ono, a candid recording by cinematographer Nic Knowlton of a woman who was not willingly a part of this project. When *Rape* was first released, it was widely seen as a comment on Ono's experience of being in the media spotlight with Lennon. Two decades later, the film seems more a parable about the implicit victimization of women by the institution of cinema.

Though it raises some of the same issues, *Fly* is very different—and a wonder. With *No. 4 (Bottoms)* it is, in my view, Ono's most watchable film. Like *Rape* it has a number of historical precedents —Willard Maas's *Geography of the Body* (1943), most obviously—but it remains powerful and fascinating. Basically, *Fly* is Ono's production of another of her mini-"film scripts"—"Film No. 11 (Fly)"—though it is more elaborate, and at 37 minutes, shorter than the original concept. At first, a fly is seen, in extreme close-up, as it "explores" the body of a nude woman (she's identified as "Virginia Lust" in the credits); later more and more flies are seen crawling on the body, which now looks more like a corpse; and at the end, the camera pans up and "flies" out the window of the room. The remarkable sound track is a combination of excerpts from Ono's record *Fly* and music composed by Lennon. In general, the music changes mood as the film does.

Up Your Legs Forever is basically a remake of *No. 4 (Bottoms)*, using legs, rather than buttocks: the camera continually pans up from the feet to the upper thighs of hundreds of men and women, as we listen to the sound of the panning apparatus and a variety of conversations about the project. Though *Up Your Legs Forever* has some interesting moments, it doesn't have the drama or the humor of *No. 4 (Bottoms)*.

The two Lennon films on which Ono and Lennon collaborated remain effective. *Apotheosis* is one of the most ingenious single-shot films ever made. A camera pans up the cloaked bodies of Lennon and Ono, then on up into the sky above a village, higher and higher across snow-covered fields (the camera was mounted in a hot-air balloon, which we never see—though we hear the device that heats the air) and then up into the clouds; the screen remains completely white for several minutes, and finally, once many members of the audience have given up on the film, the camera rises out into the sun above the clouds. It's a beautiful film to watch, a test and reward of viewer patience and serenity. For *Erection*, a camera was mounted so that we can watch the construction of a building, in time-lapse dissolves from one image to another, several hours or days later on. The film is not so much about the action of constructing a building (as a pixillated film of such a subject might be), as it is about the subtle, sometimes magical changes that take place between the dissolves. *Erection* is more a mystery than a documentation.

Imagine (1971), the final Ono/Lennon collaboration, is the one major Ono film I've not had an opportunity to see. Since 1971 Ono has made no films, though she did make a seven-minute video documenting response to a conceptual event at the Museum of Modern Art—*Museum of Modern Art*

Show (1971). She has also made several music videos which document her process of recovering from Lennon's death—*Walking on Thin Ice* (1981), *Woman* (1981), *Goodbye Sadness* (1982)—as well as records and art objects.

Of course, she remains one of the world's most visible public figures and the most widely known conceptual artist.

Interview

Were you a moviegoer as a child?

I was a movie buff, yes. In prep school in Tokyo you were supposed to go directly home after school. But most of us kids often went to the movies. We used to hide our school badges on our uniforms and sneak into the theater.

Do you remember what you saw?

Yes, I mostly saw French films. There was a group of kids who liked American films—Jimmy Stewart and Katharine Hepburn, Doris Day and Rock Hudson, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby—and there was another crowd of girls who thought they were intellectuals, and went to French films. I was in the French film group. We would go to see *The Children of Paradise*, that sort of thing. It was really a very exciting time. I loved those films.

Did you see some of the early French surrealist films from the 1920s?

Those things I saw much later. We're talking about when I was in high school in the late 1940s. I saw the surrealist films in the 60's in New York and Paris.

The films I saw in high school that were closest to surrealism were the Cocteau films, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Orpheus*. Those films really gave me some ideas.

The earliest I know of you in connection with film is the sound track you did for Taka Iimura's Love *in 1963; you hung the microphone out the window and that was the sound track. I know the later Fluxfilm reels that were made in 1966, but did the Fluxus group get involved with film before that?*

No. I think that one of the reasons why we couldn't make films or didn't think of making films was that we felt that it was an enormously expensive venture. At that time, I didn't even have the money to buy canvas. I'd go to army surplus shops and get that canvas that's rolled up. During that period, I felt that getting a camera to do a film was unrealistic.

Grapefruit *includes what I assume are excerpts from "Six Film Scripts," tiny descriptions of conceptual film projects. Two are included in* Grapefruit. *Where there others, or was the indication that there were six scripts a conceptual joke?*

No, there were six at first; then later there were others. At the time I wrote those scripts, I sent them, or most of them, to Jonas Mekas, to document them. Actually, that's why I have copies of them now.

There seems to be confusion about the names and numbers of the films on the Fluxfilm Program *(1966), and about who did them. I assume you made the two slow-motion films,* Eyeblink *and* Match, *and the first film about buttocks,* No. 4.

Those are mine, yes.

Did people collaborate in making those films, or did everybody work individually and then just put the films onto those two Fluxus reels?

One day George [Maciunas] called me and said he's got the use of a high-speed camera and it's a good opportunity, so just come over and make some films. So I went there, and the high-speed camera was set up and he said, "Give me some ideas! Think of some ideas for films!" There weren't many people around, at the beginning just George and . . .

Peter Moore is credited on a lot of the slow motion films.

Yeah, Peter Moore was there, and Barbara Moore came too. And other people were coming in—I forget who they were—but not many. It was a small apartment, I don't remember whose, but it wasn't George's. When I arrived, I was the only person there, outside of George. I don't know how George managed to get the high-speed camera. I don't think he paid for it. But it was the kind of opportunity that if you can get it, you grab it. So I'm there, and I got the idea of *Match* and *Eyeblink* and we shot these. I thought *Eyeblink* didn't come

out too well. It was my eye, and I didn't like my eye.

I like that film a lot. Framed the way it is, the eye becomes erotic; it's suggestive of body parts normally considered more erotic.

The one of those high-speed films I liked best was one you didn't mention: *Smoking.*

The one by Joe Jones.

Yes. I thought that one was amazing, so beautiful; it was like frozen smoke.

There's a film on that reel called Disappearing Music for Face . . .

Chieko Shiomi's film, yeah.

I understand you were involved in that one too.

Well, that was my smile. That was me. What happened was that Chieko Shiomi was in Japan at the time. She was coming here often; it wasn't like she was stationed in Japan all the time, but at the time I think she had just left to go to Japan. Then this high-speed camera idea came up, and when George was saying, "Quick, quick, ideas," I said, "Well, how about *smile*"; and he said, "No, that you can't do, think of something else." "But," I said, "*Smile* is a very important one. I really want to do it," because I always had that idea, but George keeps saying, "No you can't do that one." Finally, he said, "Well, OK, actually I wanted to save that for Chieko Shiomi because she had the same idea. But I will let you perform." So that's me smiling. Later I found out that hers was a disappearing piece; the concept is totally different from what I wanted to do. Chieko Shiomi's idea is beautiful; she catches the *disappearance* of a smile. At the time I didn't know what her title was.

I assume No. 4 *was shot at a different time.*

Yes. At the time I was living at 1 West 100th Street. It was shot in my apartment. My then husband Tony Cox and Jeff Perkins helped.

The long version of the buttocks film, No. 4 (Bottoms) *(1966), is still amazing.*

I think that film had a social impact at the time because of what was going on in the world and also because of what was going on in the film world. It's a pretty interesting film really.

Do you know the statement I wrote about taking any film and burying it underground for fifty years [See *Grapefruit*, Section 9, "On Film No. 4," paragraph 3, and "On Film No. 5 & Two Virgins," paragraph 2]? It's like wine. Any film, any cheap film, if you put it underground for fifty years, becomes a masterpiece. After fifty years it's interesting [laughter]. You just take a shot of people walking, and that's enough: the weight of history is so incredible.

When No. 4 (Bottoms) *was made, the idea of showing a lot of asses was completely outrageous. Bottoms were a less respected, less revealed part of the anatomy. These days things have changed. Now bottoms are OK—certain bottoms. What I found exhilarating about watching the film (maybe because I've always been insecure about* my *bottom!) is that after you see hundreds of bottoms, you realize that during the whole time you watched the film, you never saw the "correct," marketable jean-ad bottom. You realize that nobody's bottom is the way bottoms are supposed to be: they droop, or there are pimples—something is "wrong." I think the film would have almost as much impact now as it did then—though in a different way.*

Well, you see, it's not just to do with bottoms. For me the film is less about bottoms than about a certain beat, a beat you didn't see in films, even in avant-garde films then.

This is something else, but I remember one beautiful film where the stationary camera just keeps zooming toward a wall . . .

Wavelength*? Michael Snow's film?*

Right, Michael Snow. That's an incredibly beautiful film, a revolution in itself really. Bottoms film was a different thing, but just as revolutionary I think. It was about a beat, about movement. The beat in bottoms film is comparable to a rock beat. Even in the music world there wasn't that beat until rock came. It's the closest thing to the heartbeat. I tried to capture that again with *Up Your Legs Forever* (1970). But in *No. 4 (Bottoms)* it worked much better. Maybe it was the bottoms. That film has a *basic* energy. I couldn't capture it in *Up Your Legs Forever.*

No. 4 (Bottoms) *plays with your perceptions and your memory in different ways. For awhile it seems like a simple, serial structure, one bottom after another. Then at a certain point you realize, Oh I've seen that bottom before . . . but was it with this sound? No, I don't think so. Later you may see*

another bottom a second time, clearly with the same sound. A new kind of viewing experience develops. Did you record all the bottoms and the spoken material for the track, and then later, using that material, develop a structure? It seems almost scored.

Yes. I spent a lot of hours in editing. It wasn't just put together. The sequence was important. A sympathetic studio said that I could come at midnight or whenever no one was using the facilities, to do the editing. I got a lot of editing time free; that's how I was able to finish it.

On the sound track some of the participants talk about the process of getting people to show up to have their bottoms recorded, but I'm not completely sure what the process was. You put an ad in a theatrical paper apparently.

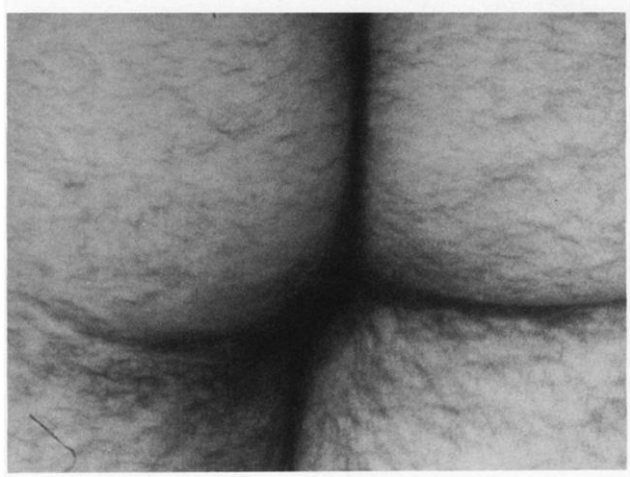
Well, we had an ad, yes, but most of the people were friends of friends. It became a fantastic event. You have to understand, the minute the announcement was made, there was a new joke about it in the newspapers everyday, and everybody was into it. It was an event. We filmed at Victor Musgrave's place, he was a very good friend who was very generous in letting me use his townhouse.

Did you select bottoms or did you use everybody that was filmed? Were there really 365 bottoms involved?

I didn't select bottoms. There was not enough for 365 anyway. And the impact of the film as a happening was already getting lost from filming for so long. And there was the rental of the camera and the practical aspect of the shooting schedule. At a certain point I just said, "Oh well, the number's conceptual anyway, so who cares. It's enough!"

I assume that when you did the early Fluxus version of No. 4, *you just followed people walking across an apartment. For the long film you'd built a machine to do the filming which allowed you to film in more controlled close-up; we can't see around the sides of the bodies the way we can in the earlier film.*

Well, in the first *No. 4* I was pretty close too. But, as you say, it wasn't really perfect. In London we did it almost perfectly. My idea both times was very visual. All my films had very visual concepts behind them in the beginning. I mean *No. 4 (Bot-*



Shots from
No. 4 (Bottoms)
(1967)

toms) has many levels of impact—one being political, but originally I simply wanted to cover the screen with one object, with something that was moving constantly. In the course of seeing films, I had never seen a film where an object was covering the screen all the way through. There's always a background. The closest you get to what I mean is like some macho guy, a cowboy or something, standing with his back to the screen, but you always see a little background. The screen is never covered; so I thought, if you don't leave a background it might be like the whole screen is moving. I just wanted to have that experience. As you say, it didn't work in the early version, but it was the first idea I had for the film actually.

And also, the juxtaposition of the movement of the four sections of the bottoms was fascinating, I thought.

No. 4 (Bottoms) *reminds me of Eadweard Muybridge's motion photographs.*

Oh I see, yeah.

Was the finished film shown a lot?

Well, I finally got an OK from the censor and we showed it in Charing Cross Road. Then some American Hollywood producer came and said he wanted to buy it and to take it to the United States. Also, he wanted me to make 365 breasts, and I said, if we're going to do breasts, then I will do a sequence of one breast, you know, fill the screen with a single breast over and over, but I don't think that was erotic enough for him. He was thinking eroticism; I was thinking about the visual, graphic concepts—a totally different thing. I was too proud to make two breasts [laughter]. I think there was an attempt to take the bottoms film to the United States, but it was promptly confiscated by the censor.

At customs?

Yes.

There's a mention on the sound track that you were planning to do other versions of that film in other countries, and the film ends with the phrase, "To Be Continued." Was that a concept for other films, or were there some specific plans for follow-ups?

Well you see, all my films do have a conceptual side. I have all these scripts, and I get excited just to show them to people because my hope is that maybe they will want to make some of them. That would be great. I mean most of my films are film instructions; they were never made actually. Just as film instructions, I think they are valid, but it would be very good if somebody makes them. I don't have to make them myself. The concepts themselves are interesting; they don't have to be *made* by me. And also, each film I made had a projection of future plans built into the idea. If somebody picks up on one of them, that's great.

At the time I was making films, what I felt I was doing was similar to what *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* did later. I wanted to involve the audience directly in new ways.

How did Film No. 5 (Smile) *(1968) come about?*

When I went to London, I still kept thinking about the idea of smile, so when I had the chance, I decided to do my version. Of course, until John and I got together, I could never have rented a high-speed camera. Well, maybe if I'd looked into it, I could have. I don't know, but I thought it would be too expensive.

Did you know Lennon well at the point when you did Film No. 5 (Smile)*?*

Yes.

Because I wondered whether you made the film because you wanted to capture a certain complexity in him, or whether the complexity that's revealed in that seemingly simple image is a result of what the high-speed camera reveals, or creates, as it films.

Well, certainly I knew John was a complex person. But the film wasn't so much about his complexity as a person. I was trying to capture the complexity of a visual experience. What you see in that film is very similar to how you perceive somebody when you are on acid. We had done acid trips together, and that gave me the idea. I wondered how do you capture this?

It's a beautiful film.

Well, of course, you know from the statements I made about *Smile* [See Ono, *Grapefruit*, "On Film No. 5 & Two Virgins": the second part of the book's final section, "9 ON FILMS" (the first part is about *No. 4 (Bottoms)*, the final part, about *Rape*)] that my idea was really very different from the film I finally made. My idea was to do *everybody's* smile. But when I met John, I thought, do-

ing *everybody's* smile is going to be impossible; and he can *represent* everybody's smile.

What I find incredible about Smile *is that as you watch John's face, it's almost as though you can see his mind working. I don't know whether it's an optical illusion, maybe it's created by the way that the camera works. But it's almost as though as you watch, the expression is changing every second.*

I know. It's incredible, isn't it? Of course I didn't know what exactly a high-speed camera would do. I knew in general, but I didn't quite know what the exact effect would be. And, of course, I never would have known unless George Maciunas had rented a high-speed camera and called me up. George was a very interesting person. He had a very artistic mind. I never knew why he didn't create his own art; he always wanted to take the role of helping create other peoples' work. But that combination was very good; he not only executed what we wanted, he gave us the opportunity to look into the areas we would never have looked into. He had that kind of mind.

With Two Virgins *(1968) you and John began collaborating on films and in the next few years there was a whole series of collaborations. Judging from the credits on the films, I assume that one or the other of you would get an idea and then both of you would work the idea out, and that whoever had the original idea for a particular film—that film was theirs. Normally, the directorial credit is considered the most important one, but on these films there's a more basic credit. It might be "Film by Yoko Ono"; "Directed and produced by John and Yoko." Am I correct: was it that whoever had the original concept for the film, that's whose film it was?*

Yes.

I remember reading years ago in a collection of Rolling Stone *interviews that when you and John got involved with politics and in particular with the Bed-In, it was partly because Peter Watkins had written you a letter. Is that how you remember it?*

Well, yes, Peter Watkins's letter was a confrontation to us, and at the time we had a conversation about what we felt we had been doing politically: "Well, I was doing this. Yes, I was doing that." As a Beatle, John was always asked, "What is your position about the Vietnam War," or something else; and I think that their manager, Brian Epstein, was very concerned that they wouldn't make any statements, and so they didn't make any direct statements. But there was a covert statement that was made through an album cover that was censored, as you know. And I was standing in Trafalgar Square, in a bag, for peace and all that. So separately we had that awareness, and we were expressing it in the ways that we could. I was doing it more freely because it was easier for me. So we were comparing notes after getting the letter, and then we were saying, "Well what about doing something together, which was the Bed-In (and the film *Bed-In* [1969]), so Peter Watkins's letter definitely did mean something to us.

How much control did you (or you and John) have over the way Bed-In *looks? You credit a large crew on that film. What was your part in the final film, other than as performers?*

We always maintained careful control over the finished films. I was generally in charge of editing, which I did for that film, and for others, frame by frame. I mean I would have a film editor working with me—I don't know the technology—but I would be very specific about what I wanted. When Jonas [Mekas] did the John and Yoko screenings at Anthology [Anthology Film Archives], I had three editing machines and editors brought into our hotel room, and I edited *Bed-In* there because of the deadline.

I enjoy the editing part of film-making most of all; that's where the films really get made.

Rape *(1969) is often talked about as a parable of the media intruding into your lives, but when I saw it again the other week, it struck me as very similar to pieces in* Grapefruit.

Well, they keep saying that. I'll tell you what happened. By the time that I actually got to make the film, John and I were together, and the reporters were hounding us, but the *Rape* concept was something that I thought of before John and I got together.

In Grapefruit *there's "BACK PIECE," a part of which is "Follow someone for four hours."*

It was that kind of thing, right. But it was also a film script ["Film No. 5 (Rape, or Chase)"].

How candid is the Rape *footage? It no longer* looks *candid to me.*

It was completely candid—except for the effects we did later in the editing. The girl in the film did not know what was happening. Her sister was in on it, so when she calls her sister on the phone, her sister is just laughing at her and the girl doesn't understand why. Nic Knowland did the actual shooting. I wasn't there. Everything was candid, but I kept pushing him to bring back better material. The type of material he brought back at first was something like he would be standing on the street, and when a group of girls passed by, he would direct the camera to them. The girls would just giggle and run away, and he wouldn't follow. I kept saying he could do better than that, but he actually had a personal problem doing the film because he was a Buddhist and a peacenik: he didn't want to intrude on people's privacy. I remember John saying later that no actress could have given a performance that real.

I've done tons of work, and I don't have time to check it all out, but I wish I could check about this strange thing, which is that a lot of my works have been a projection of my future fate. It frightens me. It simply frightens me. I don't want to see *Rape* now. I haven't seen the *Rape* film in a long time, but just thinking about the concept of it frightens me because now I'm in that position, the position of the woman in the film.

In the video Walking on Thin Ice *(1981), we see a similar scene, but with you.*

I know. And why did I think of *that* song? After I wrote that song all sorts of trouble started to happen, all of which was somehow related to the song, that feeling of walking on thin ice. Sometimes I intentionally try to write something positive. But in a situation like that, art comes first. I really thought "Walking on Thin Ice" was a good song when it came to me. I had no qualms about recording it. The artistic desire of expressing something supersedes the worry, I suppose, and you think, ah it's nothing, it's fine, it's just a nice song or something; and then it turns out that it becomes my life and I *don't* want that.

Just recently I was in this film where I performed as a bag lady [*Homeless*, directed by Yukihiko Tsutsumi, unreleased as yet]. In fact, I was a bit concerned what it might mean to enact a bag lady, in terms of future projections. But I reasoned that there are actors who die many times in films, but live long lives, so actually enacting death makes their real lives longer. Well, in the first scene it was a beautiful April day, one of those I'm-glad-to-be-in-New York days, and I'm wearing these rags and I'm pushing an empty baby carriage in this beautiful green environment. And as I was doing it, I remembered the song "Greenfield Morning" and the line, "I pushed an empty baby carriage all over the city." That was the first song we recorded for Yoko Ono's Plastic Ono Band, and I think it's in *Grapefruit*, too—I mean the instruction "Push an empty baby carriage all over the city" [See "CITY PIECE: Walk all over the city with an empty baby carriage"—1961 Winter, near the end of the first section (Music) of *Grapefruit*]. So I'm pushing the baby carriage and I'm thinking I don't want to *know* about this. That aspect of projection is interesting, isn't it?

Yes.

If you are somebody that makes films with a commercial concern or other concerns, other than just inspiration, maybe that sort of thing wouldn't happen. I don't know. But inspiration is very much connected with your life in the past and future.

Apotheosis *(1970) is a gorgeous film. It's one of the collaborations that's listed as John's film, though the idea of stripping things away until you've got a white screen is very much like some of your work.*

Well, I'll tell you what happened. I think some of the instructions are already there in *Grapefruit*, or maybe not, maybe it's one of the instructions that haven't been published [Ono is referring to the second version of "Film No. 1 (A Walk to the Taj Mahal)"]. There was a constant feeling of wanting to take an object that's on the ground—not necessarily an object, could be a person—in fact the original idea was a drunken guy walking in a snowy field; you don't see the drunken guy, but the camera suggests that he's drunk because of the way it moves. So he walks and sways, and finally the camera goes up in the sky. When we did the cover for the "Two Virgins" album, where we were both naked, one of us said, "Why don't we make a film where the camera moves from the ground up, shooting our naked bodies, and then just goes up in the air." Later, John said, "Well, let's make one

where the camera goes up." So the idea stemmed from that. What happened, of course, was that we didn't expect the balloon film to be the way it turned out. We went up in the balloon, and it happened to be a snowy day.

You were in the balloon with the camera?

Up to a certain point. The part where you go into the cloud, and then break out of the cloud, was taken later. The footage that came back from the lab was beautiful. It was just something that happened naturally, the dogs barking, everything that happened—it was an incredible experience. We didn't expect it was going to be that beautiful. A lot of things just happen, you know.

If you allow them to, I guess.

Yes!

Fly *(1970) seems almost the opposite of* Apotheosis *in a way; it seems . . .*

Very much intentionally calculated?

Right.

It's true.

You did the sound [for the record album Fly*] before you did the film. Had you had the idea in mind then?*

I was always thinking about the idea of fly. Actually, I was always fascinated with the pun "fly" and "fly" in English. There was also a conceptual event about flies and where they fly to.

The piece you did for the Museum of Modern Art?

Yes. Did you see that Museum of Modern Art catalogue [a 112-page, 1 foot × 1 foot catalogue—the title seems to be *Museum of Modern [F]Art* (Ono is carrying a shopping bag with the letter "F" directly beneath the Museum of Modern Art mar-

Apotheosis (1970)

quee)—which details her concept at length; the catalogue was designed by Ono and produced by Michael Gross]? At the end of that, I talk about how to fly.

I know the video with the sandwich board guy in front of the Museum of Modern Art who interviews people about the Yoko Ono show that "isn't there" [The Museum of Modern Art Show, 1971]. *In the text for that piece, you explain how some flies were exposed to your perfume and let loose and that people are following those flies around to see where they land.*

The catalogue was made for that event; it had all sorts of interesting stuff in it, about how to fly and all that. All the pages are postcards that you could mail, so the catalogue and *Fly* piece could fly all over the place.

So MoMA had this on sale?

No, no, no, no! MoMA would not do it. MoMA was busy saying to people, "There's no Yoko Ono show here." People would come in and ask, is there a Yoko Ono show, and they would say no. They were very upset; they didn't know what was going on. So I couldn't sell the book anywhere. Nobody bought it, so I have piles of it.

Earlier, in the mid-1960s, you did a number of descriptions of environmental boxes that the viewer would go inside of and images would be projected on the outside. Eyeblink *was involved in a number of those descriptions, and another was called "Fly." I guess the idea was that a viewer would go inside the box and on all sides you would project images that would create the sensation that the viewer was flying.*

How do you know about these boxes?

I found the descriptions in the Fluxus Codex, *in the Yoko Ono section [See Jon Hendricks,* Fluxus Codex *(New York: Abrams, 1988, p. 418 for the descriptions]. Was either piece ever built [I show her the descriptions]?*

They were never built. I haven't seen these ideas since I did them. Whenever I had an idea, I sent it to George Maciunas. He probably kept them. I don't even have the originals for these. I'll have to get this book. You know, I have this thing about reading about me. When something about me is in a book, I mostly don't want to know about it.

One of the interesting things about watching the film Fly *is that one's sense of what the body we're seeing is about, and what the film is about, is constantly changing.*

A cartoon in a newspaper gave me an idea. There's this woman with a low-cut dress, and a guy is looking at her, and the guy's wife says, "What are you looking at!" and the guy says, "Oh, I'm looking at a fly on her." I wanted the film to be an experience where you're always wondering, am I following the movement of fly or am I looking at the body? I think that life is full of that kind of thing. We're always sort of deceiving ourselves about what we're really seeing.

Do you know the Willard Maas film Geography of the Body*? It's all close-ups of bodies, framed so that you can't quite tell what body part you're looking at—but they all look erotic.* Eyeblink *is a little like that, and* Fly *is full of that effect. If you go close enough, every part of the body looks the same, and they're all equally erotic.*

Oh, there's an incredible film instruction that has to do with that close-up idea. It's a travelogue ["Film No. 13 (Travelogue)"]. You have a travelogue to Japan or somewhere, and you say, "Well, now I'm on Mount Fuji," and there's an incredible close-up of stones; and then, "We bathed in a mixed bath," and you see just steam—you get it?—and then, "We ate noodles," and you see an incredible close-up of noodles . . . so in effect you can make a travelogue of any country without going out of your apartment! "Then we saw geisha girls," and you see an incredible close-up of hair [laughter]. I wanted to make that, but I just never got around to it.

Freedom *(1970), the little one-minute film of you trying to take your bra off was made the same year as* Fly.

Yeah, isn't that a great little film?

It's so paradoxical. You show freedom as the ability to try to break free, which implies that you're never really free.

Right, exactly.

You mentioned earlier that you didn't think Up Your Legs Forever *worked as well as* No. 4 (Bottoms). *I thought it was interesting to see that people's one leg is very different from their other leg.*

The best thing about that film is the title, I

During the shooting of *Smile* (1968). Lennon being lit, Ono behind the high-speed camera

think. My first vision for that film was like going up all the legs, up, up, up, to eternity ["Film No. 12 (Ecstacy)"]. But in making it, that vision got lost because of what was necessary to film the legs. I don't know how you can do what I originally had in mind.

Jonas and Adolfas Mekas are thanked at the end of Up Your Legs Forever.

Because they did the editing. That was one of the few films I didn't edit myself.

Somebody mentioned to me the other day, and I assume it's not true, that Erection *was originally a film about John's penis. Was there a film like that?*

Yes, there was. But it wasn't called *Erection*. I think it was called *Self Portrait*, and it wasn't an erection, it was just a long shot of his penis. That was his idea. The funny thing was that *Self Portrait* was never questioned by the customs because of its title, and *Erection*, which was about the erection of a building, was questioned.

Is there a relation between the 1971 version of Imagine *and the recent* Imagine: John Lennon*?*

There's no relationship. We wanted to make a surrealistic film in the tradition of Buñuel and Cocteau. It was John's idea to say just one or two words at the beginning, and make the rest of the film silent, like a silent movie. I liked that idea and we did it. I think that now it's more or less known as a forefather of MTV. Each scene came from some idea John or I had. It was really a collaboration between John and me.

I've heard a rumor that the American Federation of Arts might be re-releasing some of your films.

They're saying they want to do it. It's just a question basically of going through the negatives and making a deal, that kind of thing.

Which films are involved?

There was a meeting between them and John Hanhardt and me, and I think they want John Hanhardt to select the films.

It'd be so much fun to show those films again. There are whole generations now that have no awareness of them at all.

Are you involved in film now? Are you planning to make films? You made several videos in the early 1980s. They seem like a personal kind of art therapy; you seem to be trying to get hold of where you are at that point. But it's been awhile since you've made a film.

I don't know; it might get to that. I'm one of

those people who can't do something unless I'm totally motivated. That's one of the reasons I jump from one media to another. I did the Whitney Museum show, and suddenly all the inspiration is sculptural; and then last night or the night before, I went to the studio to do some music. But I'm not getting that feeling like I gotta make a film—except for *The Tea Party* [see "Film No. 7 (Tea Party)"]: for the last several years I keep wanting to make that one, but because of the technical difficulties I don't seem to be able to get it together. I think one of the reasons I'm not making more films is that I've done so many film scripts. I'd like to see one of them made by somebody else. Maybe one day out of the blue I'll feel it so strongly that I'll make a film myself again.

Notes

1. The Whitney published a small catalogue for the Ono show: *Yoko Ono: Objects, Films*. The catalogue includes two essays, one by John Hanhardt on the films, and the other by Barbara Haskell, on the objects.

   Between the 1960s and the Whitney retrospective, Ono's films received almost no serious critical commentary and minimal historical notice. Jonas Mekas's January 14, 1971, review of the Ono/Lennon films is reprinted in *Movie Journal* (New York: Colliers, 1972); it's a brief review, Mekas in fine form—full of ideas (and enthusiasm) about *Apotheosis*, *Rape*, *Fly*, and *Up Your Legs Forever* and about the audience he saw them with. In more recent years, Jim Hoberman is the one critic I'm aware of who has been consistently supportive of Ono's work. At the Cinema Histories, Cinema Practices 2 Conference in Milwaukee in 1982, he challenged the theoretically minded academics in attendence to remember and reconsider Ono's films. Hoberman reviewed *Rape* on the occasion of the Whitney's presentation of the film. He argues that *Rape* is "the purest illustration of Laura Mulvey's celebrated essay, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,' published eight years after *Rape* was made": "Basically, *Rape* presents a beautiful, extremely feminine woman in peril, her situation overtly sexualized by the very title. (The opening graveyard provides a suitably gothic location.) Although this scenario is a movie staple, the absence of a narrative strongly invites the audience to identify with the camera's (unmistakably male) look and recognize this controlling gaze as its own." See *The Voice*, March 14, 1989, p. 57.

   Daryl Chin reviewed the entire Ono show for *The Independent*: "Walking on Thin Ice: The Films of Yoko Ono," April 1989, pp. 19–23. Chin creates a historical context for Ono's work, a context that includes both the Fluxus movement and the work of other avant-garde film-makers (Michael Snow, Carolee Schneemann). Chin senses a rage in Ono's films; it's a rage I don't feel.
2. See Haskell, "Yoko Ono: Objects" in the Whitney catalogue, p. 1.
3. Haskell, p. 2.
4. The complete *Fluxfilm Program*, including *Match*, is in the collection of Anthology Film Archives in New York.
5. See Scott MacDonald, "Putting All Your Eggs in One Basket: A Survey of Single-Shot Film," *Afterimage* (March 1989), pp. 10–16.

Scripts

What follows are 16 "film scripts" Ono wrote in the 1960s and a brief essay, "ADDENDUM '88," she wrote for the Whitney Museum theater at the time of her show. Most of the film scripts (and the essay) are published here for the first time. As will be apparent, the film scripts are conceptual designs for films, not scripts in any conventional sense. They were written between 1964 and 1968, basically in two groups. The first—"Six Film Scripts by Yoko Ono"—was copyrighted in 1964. Three of the six scripts—"Film No. 3 (Ask audience to cut . . .)," "Film No. 5 (Ask audience the following . . .)," and "Film No. 6 (Omnibus Film)"—were originally published in *Grapefruit* in 1964, along with "Imaginary Film Series: Shi (From the Cradle to the Grave of Mr. So)," which is also included here.

The remaining 9 film scripts were copyrighted in 1968. Because Ono's numbering of film scripts was always random and a matter of immediate convenience, several numbers overlap. I've tried to minimize confusion by including the complete titles and subtitles for each film script. Further complexity has resulted from the fact that Ono sometimes numbered completed films with no regard for the numbering of the film scripts. Throughout my introduction and our interview, and in this publication of the film scripts, I have presented film script titles in quotation marks and completed films in italics.

What would have been Ono's eighth film script exists, so far as I am able to determine, only as a pair of completed films known as *No. 4*: the 5½-minute short included by George Maciunas on his

1966 *Fluxfilm Program* and the 1967 feature, *No. 4 (Bottoms)*, produced independently in London. The film completed immediately after the feature *No. 4 (Bottoms)* is *Film No. 5 (Smile)*. The film script "Film No. 5 (Rape, or Chase)" was made in 1968 and entitled *Rape*. "Film No. 11 (Fly)" and "Film No. 12 (Ecstacy)" were made and released in 1970, as *Fly* and *Up Your Legs Forever*, respectively.

Ono made a special request that the texts of the film scripts be printed as they were, without correction. Therefore, Ono's original spelling and syntax have been retained. According to Ono, the informality about detail was very much a part of the aesthetic she was working in: "In those days there was an incredible sense of immediacy and urgency in me and in my life. Whenever I had an idea, I would scribble it down on any piece of paper that was around. Not losing them was a miracle. Of course, many of them were lost, but these scripts that are left are enough to indicate the direction I was going in. Putting the scripts together before they got lost, typing them up, and sending them out was a tedious enough job for me that I never carefully read them back to correct them."

We are also printing "ADDENDUM '88" just as she wrote it.

Film No. 1 (A Walk to the Taj Mahal) [second version]

The film consists of snowfall only. The camera will make a walk movement of a person in the snow. The camera will move sometimes in circle, sometimes zigzag, sometimes slow, but mostly, will be in a normal speed. Then at the last point, it will go up to the sky. It should make the audience feel as if they are the ones who are walking in the snow and who go up into the sky.

This should take something like an hour for the total walk.

For the sound, ask the audience to hold bunch of white flowers and pick them slowly.

Film No. 2 (Mona Lisa & Her Smile)

Ask audience to stare at a figure (ANY FIGURE) for a long time and then immediately turn their eyes to the screen and see the reflection.

Film No. 3 (Ask audience to cut . . .)

Ask audience to cut the part of the image on the screen that they don't like. Supply scissors.

Film No. 4 (Ask audience to stare . . .)

Ask audience to stare at the screen until it becomes black.

Film No. 5 (Ask audience the following . . .)

Ask audience the following:

1) not to look at Rock Hudson, but only Doris Day.

2) not to look at any round objects but only square and angled objects—if you look at a round object watch it until it becomes square and angled.

3) not to look at blue but only red—if blue comes out close eyes or do something so you do not see, if you saw it, then make believe that you have not seen it, or punish yourself.

Film No. 5 (Rape, or Chase)

Rape with camera. 1½ hr. colour synchronized sound.

A cameraman will chase a girl on a street with a camera persistantly until he corners her in an alley, and, if possible, until she is in a falling position.

The camera will be taking a risk of offending the girl as the girl is somebody he picks up arbitrarily on the street, but there is a way to get around this.

Depending on the budget, the chase should be made with girls of different age, etc. May chase boys and men as well.

As the film progresses, and as it goes towards the end, the chase and the running should become slower and slower like in a dream, using a high-speed camera.

I have a cameraman who's prepared to do this successfully.

Film No. 6 (Omnibus Film)

1) Give a print of the same film to many directors.

2) Ask each one to re-edit the print without leaving out any of the material in such a way that it will be unnoticed that the print was re-edited.

3) Show all the versions together omnibus style.

Imaginary Film Series: Shi (From the cradle to the grave of Mr. So)

A slow film taken in the time space of 60 years, following a person who's born and died. From about the 30th year, it becomes a film of a couple, as the man gets married. It really becomes "a film of waiting" towards the end since the film obviously starts to have a senile quality in its camera work, while the man in the film looks still robust. It is amazing that the death came so suddenly over the man in a form of diarrhea. Highly incredible film which makes one think.—You never know when you die.

A FILM OF SUPER-REALISM

SHI (From the cradle to the grave of Mr. So)

Interview with the director, Mr. Toyama.

Tell me, Mr. Toyama, you are relatively unknown in the film world, do you think it had something to do with the fact that you were devoted to the making of this film "SHI" (this is no misprint —means "death" in Japanese) of super-realism, as they call now?

Yes, definitely.

How long did it take for you to make this film?

Sisty years.

Incredible.

Well, you can say that, I suppose. But it could have been longer if he hadn't died then. I was lucky.

Now people are saying that this film will create a new move in the film world. Do you think this will happen?

It all depends on how you can outlive the film.

Yes, yes, I heard that in the end you were getting rather impatient, that you didn't know if you could wait until the death scene takes place. You didn't, of course, use any means to speed up the ending or anything?

No, no, everything took place naturally.

What was the cause of death?

Diarrhea.

I understand that the film was backed by a Japanese Ketchup Company?

Yes, and that's why the whole thing has a pink tone to it. They wanted me to use a red theme that reminds you of ketchup, but I used pink instead. But I made sure that the blood would look like ketchup, and the ketchup like blood, showing that both substances were equally essential. The ketchup company liked that. Also, this gave a little surrealistic touch to the film, which, otherwise, would have been too realistic.

Film No. 6 (A Contemporary Sexual Manual: 366 sexual positions)

1½ hr. colour separate soundtrack. cast: a woman, a man and a child.

The whole film takes place in a bedroom with a large double bed in the center and a window at the foot of the bed.

The film is a family scene of a quiet couple and a four years old daughter lying on the bed for the whole night. All they do is just sleep, and the 366 sexual positions are all in the mind of the audience. But this is not Andy Warhol: in a sense that this is basically a clean, healthy heterosexual scene spared from boredom.

This delicate change of positions made by the threesome has a slow erotic dance movement quality to it on one hand, and a comfortable domestic nature (scratching eachother, etc.) on the other.

The contemporary sex, unlike what you see in blue films, reflects the complexity of our society, and it is subtle and multi-leveled. So in this film, you never see an obvious position as two people on top of eachother, or actually making love in any form. They very rarely exchange words with eachother and when they do, the sound is not synchronized so all you see is their mouth moving. But there is definitely an air of peaceful unity and coziness among the three.

The whole thing would be done in a way so that it would definitely pass the censors: which is a commercially important factor. There is no need to show the genitals, etc., though we're not going to do one of those 'under the sheets" scene, either.

There are occasional breaks that take place in the film: going to the toilet, for instance, (in which

case, all you see is one of them getting up and going out of the room and come back).

The camera will start panning from under the bed, then the foot of the bed, gradually goes up, and finally up over their heads until the window at the foot of the bed starts to cover the whole screen. This camera movement can be compared to the moon rising and then disappearing at the other end in the time space of 1½ hr.

The soundtrack in contrast to the screen consists mainly of tragic conversations between a couple who are about to split, whimpering of a child, whispers, sighs and love groans. Also, a sound-tape from a trafalgar square soap-bubble happening comes in as if they are sounds in a dream of one of them, or of the three, while they sleep. At dawn, milkbottle rattling and bird sounds will come in, and the film will end with increasingly heavy bird sound.

Film No. 7 (Tea Party)

1½ hr. Colour. Synchronized sound. Cast: a woman

A woman is having a tea party in a room. We never see others except the woman. She says "you weren't listening, were you". After that she says nothing for the whole film.

The film is basically about a room with many different time worlds in it. A clock is going fast like crazy. A sugar in a glass melts spasmodically. The woman's dress deteriorates very fast. A car passing in the street, which is reflected in the woman's eyes goes ever so slowly. A chair melts away like something made out of dust, etc. In the end, the telephone is the only thing remaining in the room. Everything else disappears with its own time rhythm.

The woman will have to be a Japanese woman with very good breasts. The scene has a peculiar mixture of Japanese tea ceremony and an English tea party.

Film No. 8 (Woman)

1½ hr. Colour. Separate sound track. Cast: one women

This is a film about pregnancy and delivery treated in a highly poetic way, as opposed to a medical report sort.

The pregnant woman is the only person in the entire film, which symbolizes the lonely venture of conception.

She is contemporary, very sensitive and intelligent. Her mentality in all phases of her thinking is equivelant to that of a man of high intelligence in our society.

The audience becomes intimated with her skin, her swell, her vomit, her walk, her smile, everything about her except her exterior circumstances, such as whether she is married, if she has a job, etc. That part of her background is completely obscure.

The whole film can be thought of as a solo dance movement of a pregnant woman: first very light and pretty—gradually the body protruding—heavy and slow, and finally the dramatic delivery and a complete stillness to follow, with an underline suggestion of peace/death (atonement).

We also see a lot of the town, the skies the stars through her pregnant eyes.

In the soundtrack, we go into her mind. It consists mostly of delivery groans, swearing, also, interviews of the woman done by imaginary reporters. The quality of the interviews are highly philosophic—something that can be compared to the last monologue in l'etranger by Camus. She first conceives of her experience as a cancer growing in her stomach, etc. She is committed. But why her and not the man? What is the relationship between her and the growth inside her? etc., etc.

Except for medical reports, no film-maker as yet has taken this subject for a film. Maybe it is because most film-makers are men, and they are sensitive to this subject. I have noticed that whenever a pregnant woman is shown in a photograph or a film, they are over beautified and romanticized with careful camera work.

I want to treat this film poetically, but not with unnecessary beautification.

I want all the girls in the world to see this film before they become pregnant. Some mother, because they have been wrongly informed that the pregnancy is the most gratifying thing for women, etc., they start to hate the child after the initial shock of going through the unglamarous reality of pregnancy.

I want to eliminate such tragedy in the world.

Financially, this is a film that can be made with minimum cost. Though it takes time to make it (6

months) and today, most film-makers would like to spend less time in making a film, I don't mind going through it, since I feel this is a very important film.

Film No. 9 (Don't Worry Love)

½ hr. to 45 mins. Colour highspeed camera synchronized sound.

This is a love message we send from England to all over the world and to the future.

The idea was conceived from the fact when a star blinks, we only conceive it 2000 years after it's actually blinked. And that they say that the love we feel now is the love that's been conceived by somebody 2000 years ago, or that somebody in the corner of the world is sending love vibrations just to keep us in love, etc.

The film will be 20 seconds each shot of people smiling and saying "don't worry love", but because the shots are done in highspeed, each smile would actually be synchronized to the highspeed motion so that what you actually hear would be a strange elongated version of "don't worry love".

I hope this film will make the whole world a shade happier and rosier, and that our smile would encourage people of 2000 years later, just as the blinking of stars. It is actually a film that would be most effective if it's seen in our great, great grandchildren's time.

We must get a galaxy of people with strong good vibrations to smile in this film—people who represent our age.

Film No. 10 (Sky)

It is a film about waiting.

First you see the sky, through a telescope that covers the whole screen. The effect is like seeing the sky from the bottom of a very deep well. Clouds pass through very slowly.

Four people all dressed up are on a top of the hill.

They are watching the sky.
And waiting, and waiting.

Some small talk between the four (all improvised)

Then one suggests that he would bring something and goes off. Remaining three talks about the one who went off.

Then another one goes off
Remaining two talks about the two who went off.

Then the third one goes off.
Remaining one moves around by himself. Then goes off.

The first one comes back with an incense.
The second and third ones come back, too.
But they can't find any matches between them to light the incense.

One goes off to get matches.
Another one goes off to get something.
The remaining one lies down to take a nap.
(notice that the fourth one never came back)

Matches are brought back.
The second one brings back a guitar.
He starts to play and three of them sing.
Then they decide that the singing might scare the "thing" away, so they stop singing.

(constant looking up of the sky and horizon)

Then one suggests that somebody should bring a big ladder. There is a discussion about who should bring the ladder. They draw straws and the one who got the shortest goes off.

Then he comes back and says he needs another one to help him bring it. So finally all three of them go together.

Then the three brings back a ladder—a huge ladder. Two holds the bottom and one goes up and looks at the sky with a huge telescope.

Still nothing.

Gradually, it gets dark and they use matches to see eachother's faces.
It gets cold and they make fire.
Also, one person gets extremely cold, so the rest of them give all their coats.

Finally, they see the fourth guy, who was away all this time, come back.

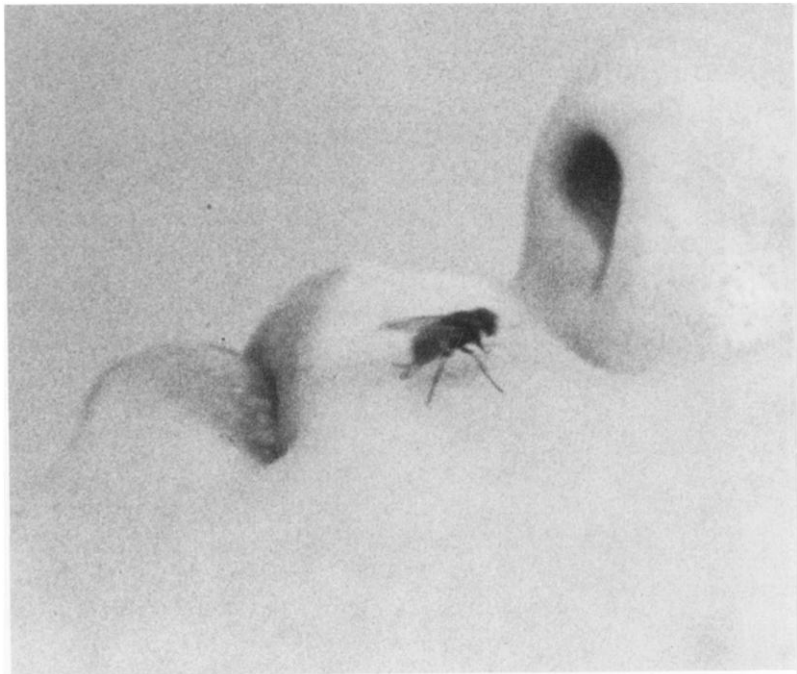
"Have you guys seen it yet?"
"No, not yet."

They are still checking the sky.
Suddenly one says "look, look!
Everybody looks.

"Did you see it?"
"No."
"Maybe"
". . . ?"

They put off the fire they made, which was getting low anyway.

And they go off with the ladder, telescope and eachother.



Fly (1970)

Film No. 11 (Fly)

About a fly going from the toe to the head of a lying naked body, crawling very slowly. The whole film should take about an hour.

Film No. 12 (Esstacy)

THE CAMERA WORK OF THE FILM SHOULD CONSTANTLY GO UP, UP, UP NON STOP. COLLECT 367 PAIRS OF LEGS AND JUST GO UP THE LEGS (FROM TOES TO THE END OF THIGHS) PAIR AFTER PAIR AND GO ON UP UNTIL YOU RUN THROUGH THE WHOLE 367.

Film No. 13 (Travelogue)

Travelogue from a point of view of a person who could only see things in focus and close-ups. Show things in close-ups and in focus as the usual narration goes on about the things to discover and enjoy on your travel. For example, you introduce Tokyo and explain that what you see there are just knives—only because you focused in on a knife shop and *that* became Tokyo to you. On the screen, you don't see knives except a very large view of the blade or a tip of the blade without any background. You could explain how beautiful the Geisha girls are, but you only show strands of hair blowing in the wind in close-up. You talk about the mixed bath experience, and only show the steam. You talk about making love in the park and show two pieces of grass waving. You talk about the experience in a noodle shop and show a close-up of the noodles without the background so the heap of noodles would look like an abstract expressionist painting.

This travelogue can be made without leaving your apartment.

Make a travelogue of your home country that expresses your focus.

Make travelogues of different countries that express your focus.

Make a travelogue of an imaginary country.

Addendum '88

Jonas Mekas once said that if the audience all walked out of your show, it meant that you were successful—or something to that effect. It was a sentiment shared by many of us in the avant-garde world at the time. It meant that you did not stoop so low as to try to entertain the audience but made a successful attempt in evoking strong emotions they were not ready to handle. It was Art vs. Entertainment.

Bottoms film was made in that tradition. I didn't think it would be so popular. A short was made in New York in '66 but the feature-length

version was made in London in '67 and probably appealed to the English sense of put-ons. Almost every day there was a little joke about my film in one of the English papers. Some of my serious avant-garde friends decided to drop me because they thought I sold out. One day I was walking down Kings Road and was spotted by some young people who started screaming my name. I remember thinking then that I would not want to be more famous than that since I would not only lose all my friends and my credibility as an artist, but would probably lose my (then) marriage which was getting a bit shaky anyway.

People called it the 'Bottoms' film, but the title of it was actually Film No. 4. "Why did you call it Film No. 4 and what are Films No. 1, 2 & 3?" was the usual question asked by journalists. "There were no Films No. 1, 2 & 3. I just liked the number 4" was my answer to that one. "Why did you choose 365 bottoms?" was the other standard question. "Who's counting? If you were, that was not what you were supposed to be doing". "Oh, what are we supposed to be doing then?" Film No. 4 mainly supplied a lot of laughs for people all over the world, most of whom never actually saw the film. Just the idea of it gave them a giggle. I found out much later that they were even giggling behind the Iron Curtain. No wonder my artistic friends dropped me. It was a total antithesis to Art per se. But actually *I* was the ultimate snob. I was going "Up Yours!" to the whole world including the avant-garde. It was a great high but also a lonely one.

The film was censored for general release as soon as it was completed. An announcement was then made that I and two thousand London youths would demonstrate in front of the Censor's Bureau to ask for the release of the film. Next morning I was there with Tony, my (then) husband and my daughter Kyoko. Tony carried Kyoko on his shoulders and I carried an armful of beautiful yellow daffodiles. Nobody was there except the reporters when we arrived. "Where are the rest of the people?—two thousand, we heard?" the reporters asked me. "They must be still asleep," I said. That gave them a laugh. I asked for the flowers to be sent up to Lord H., the gentleman who censored the film. We, 3 of us and the reporters all waited for a while . Then a girl came down from His Lordship's office and asked me to go up with her. When I went to the office the place was already filled with flowers I had sent up. The door was closed on the smiling, curious faces of the staff. I was to have a private talk. No committment was made, but I was given hope that the Lord would reconsider. The picture of me demonstrating with an armful of flowers got into the papers the next day. I've been told just recently that the news travelled as far as Ohio back then. It was also brave of the BBC News to show the Film footage on TV—close shots of naked bottoms walking—for the first time in BBC history, calling them "Censored bottoms"!

That summer would be the summer of flower children. The film censor would be reversed and Film No. 4 would have a big general release, opening in Charing Cross Road as London hippies would queue up, not so much to see the film as to take a stand. —But this was still early Spring. I remember the chilly morning breeze as we stood in front of the Censor's Bureau.

The success of the Film No. 4, however, opened up possibilities for me to make other films. Executives of big film companies readily gave me appointments to discuss about financing my next film. It didn't occur to me that some of them would just want to see what this strange phenomenon called Yoko Ono looked like. Was she really a woman? One American film executive who was on a short stay in London thought I was a girl who performed in the bottoms film and who was sent by the director to raise money. "I am the director" I said. "Oh, no, you can't be." That was supposed to be a compliment in '67 when nobody yet heard of "Woman Is The Nigger Of The World" or "Sisters O Sisters." I made a fast exit while the man was trying to fix a drink for me.

Another hurdle was my fear of disclosing my filmic ideas to prospective financiers in case they misuse them. My concern was justified in that already one famous body magazine wanted to commission me to make a pink version of the bottoms film. (A United States film company asked if I would make 365 breasts). I would not degrade my work that way. Sorry. That made them really mad . . . a bottoms film director . . . talking about degrading her work . . . who does she think she is? . . . Is she for real? Such comments found their way back to me. Try to raise money for a film with-

out disclosing the idea for it and you will find it not an easy matter. I remember one interview in particular where several men in dark suits were sitting behind a long table looking at me, trying to keep their faces straight as I spoke. "I see . . . but could we have *some* idea what the film is about?" "No, I'm afraid not."

I was extremely lucky though. Out of the blue I received a letter from an Austrian TV. They would like to commission me to make a film for them. They will give me carte blanche on the subject matter. It sounded really grand. That's how "Rape" was made. The idea of the film came to me long before the press assault became part of my life. It gives me the shivers now how prophetic that film was.

After "Rape" John and I decided to make films jointly. We enjoyed making films together. John came up with big ideas, or ideas that seemed big at least to me at the time. He thought of using the helicopter, for instance, which added a new dimension to our film venture. When John first said "Let's use a helicopter," I, who was supposed to have sold out in a big way thought, "Oh, dear, aren't we getting a bit Hollywood?" The result was that beautiful scene of 'Jealous Guy' in Imagine. There was nothing so-called Hollywood about that one. We came from two opposite worlds and that meeting was a happy medium. I changed. After my partnership with John, I lost a little edge, in a nice way, I thought. I no more felt the need to protect my filmic ideas and released them all in print so that anybody could use them to make films. It was an act of cleansing for my spirit as a woman filmmaker who carried so many chips, *and* ideas, on her shoulder.

Out of the films the one I remember warmly is IMAGINE. The idea of not saying anything during the film except in the beginning to just say good morning to each other was John's. "Let's really upset them and end the film with us walking on water." (I'll let you guess whose idea *that* was!) We tried, that is, I know it looked a bit awkward, but it was a windy day and the waves were rough. Anyway, what you see is what you get. Enjoy.

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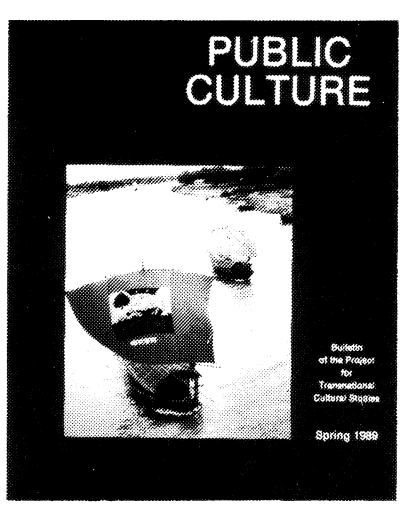

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Bulletin of the Center for Transnational Cultural Studies

William Johnson

Sound and Image

A Further Hearing

In *Last Year at Marienbad*, sound is as ambiguous as the image: as A and X prepare to leave, the chiming of a clock seems at first to be part of the incidental music.

Do we gain a more accurate insight into a film by viewing it slowly and carefully on a Steenbeck or Movieola? Too often the answer must be No, because the sound gradually dies away as the image strip is slowed and examined frame by frame. Ironically, the emphasis of film criticism and theory is skewed by a technological accident—the fact that the image strip happens to be divided into static and legible units. Although much has been written in recent years about the importance of sound, film studies continue to be based on the assumption that the image is the essence of cinema. Theories can and do flourish without acknowledging sound as an integral part of film—in some cases, almost without acknowledging its existence. Both theory and critical practice suffer as a result.

In an earlier article[1] I argued that sound was of equal importance to the image and that films could not be adequately understood without consideration of the relations between sound and image. The present article develops those arguments further and opens up new lines of attack.

First, there is one counterargument to overcome: Is is plausible that so many critics, theorists, and film-makers, with or without benefit of frame-by-frame analysis, should have continued to operate on flawed premises? In one sense the tendency is understandable. Film could assert its independence from theater and establish its own domain only by emphasizing the role of the image, and writers followed this lead. Film-makers whose work I admire, such as Hitchcock and Powell, repeatedly declared that the image is what counts in a film (while both unobtrusively took great care of their sound tracks).[2] It is easy to cite poor films that are talky or rely on a continual wash of incidental music. The assumption of image primacy has, to some extent, served as a bulwark against mediocrity.[3]

It is therefore natural that most film theorists even today begin with the image. But then, however much attention they later give to sound, only a complete overhaul of their theories can dislodge the image from its position of primacy. Unfortunately, the usual kind of close study of films is likely to strengthen that position.

The assumption that the truth of a film can be approached more closely by stopping time is understandable: it flows from the mainstream of philosophical thought that dates back at least to Parmenides. Ironically, the opposite conception of time—as a universal linear succession—that rose to power after the Renaissance and is still deeply entrenched today also militates against the recognition of sound-image relations. The conception of time as a single arrow fosters the idea that there must be one dominant succession of events in a film rather than a concurrence of two equally important channels.[4]

It is therefore no more adequate to refer to the (intermittent) "contribution" of sound to the film than it would be to refer to the (intermittent) contribution of the image. Sound *always* plays a part,

even when reduced to a minimum, just as the image always plays a part, even during a fade or blackout (or all the all-black and all-white frames of an abstract film such as Kubelka's *Arnulf Rainer*). The basis of film is a *continuous interaction* between sound and image.[5]

This interaction is quite different from the relation between sound and image in other performing arts because, in film, the two channels are separate. Even with a scene recorded directly in *cinéma vérité* style the image and sound are mediated separately, and in most films any "natural" link in tone and intensity between profilmic sound and image is thoroughly broken. In this respect the archetype of the sound film is the animated cartoon, in which the often tightly knit sound and image have no profilmic communality whatsoever.[6] The significance of this separation will become apparent in the course of this article.

Relations between the two channels are constituted primarily by the physical parameters of each. Both sound and image can vary in overall intensity (bright/dim, loud/soft, etc.), in composition (the number and relative importance of elements) and in frequency (rate of change or movement); thus at any given moment the relation between the two channels may range anywhere from complete similarity (which I call confirmation) to complete dissimilarity (opposition).[7] Since the relation itself is not a physical entity, however, it cannot be measured objectively: its position on the confirmation/opposition scale and its general effect on the viewer-auditor are influenced by content and context.

It is easiest to perceive those relations that are closest to the extremes of the confirmation/opposition scale and have some simple relevance to the content—a crude example being a loud musical chord with a close-up of a gun.[8] But since sound-image relations occur continuously throughout a film, thorough analysis requires that we account for all types, however imperceptible or apparently irrelevant. The next section offers a classification of them.

Types of sound-image relations

Sound and image can vary independently with any intentional or unintentional movement of the camera, lens, microphone, or person(s) or object(s) being filmed, as also with any modification of the image strip or sound track made in editing, scoring, dubbing, or mixing; throughout almost any film, consequently, there is a continual shifting of minor sound and image elements and of the relations between them. Since the duration of any such element may vary from a fraction of a second to a minute or more, and since the duration of any overlap between sound and image elements may vary across the same range, it is difficult to define the limits of a single minor sound-image relation; moreover, concurrent elements within each channel can form more than one sound-image relation at the same time. How can all these elusive, barely noticeable relations be classified?

The simple answer is that they can all be placed in one category, defined as relations that have no apparent significance and form no recognizable pattern. I will call them *accidental relations*. Obviously the definition is subjective: a relation that conforms to it for one person at a given time may appear significant or patterned to another person—or to the same person at a different time. Nevertheless, the threshold between accidental relations and other types, although variable, does not leave any minor relations unaccounted for.

It is also obvious that an accidental relation may have an unconscious effect on the viewer-auditor. Here again, to the extent that critical examination reveals a latent significance or pattern the relation can be transferred to another category. In other words, accidental relations include embryonic forms of other types of relations.

The foregoing paragraphs imply that sound-image relations cannot be systematically segmented or coded. Attempts to demonstrate the coding of film, such as Umberto Eco's,[9] ignore the sound track completely, whether by itself or in relation to the image.[10] As to the latter, one could divide and subdivide the paired channels of a film, both diachronically and synchronically, without ever reaching any generalizable sound-image segments. (In physical fact, however, one could *not* divide a film beyond a certain point: as I indicated earlier, the more narrowly one observes the image strip, the more one loses the sound track. An equivalent of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle comes into play.)

Does lack of coding in sound-image relations entail that semiotic bugaboo, the survival of the referent? Roland Barthes, for one, might have

feared so: in discussing all forms of narrative (including film), he insisted on a complete distinction between the fuzziness of life and the signifying function of narrative. "A narrative is never made up of anything other than functions: in differing degrees, everything in it signifies. . . . Even were a detail to appear irretrievably insignificant, resistant to all functionality, it would nonetheless end up with precisely the meaning of absurdity or uselessness. . . ."[11] Such details, which Barthes relegates to the remote conditional, are common in films, even in each channel considered alone (an intrusive insect, a slight unsteadiness of the camera in an otherwise smooth movement, the dancing grain of the emulsion in a high-key area, etc.), and although many of them may be caused by profilmic events, the mediation of the image and sound recording processes converts them into random filmic events in their own right. As for the interaction of such insignificant details from both channels—the accidental relations in question—these are at a further remove not only from profilmic events but also from any residual significance. In many cases an accidental relation arises not from the positive qualities of sound and image but from a transition between qualities in one or both channels (e.g., a pan from a light to a darker area while the same sound continues).[12] In short, the film does not have to smuggle the fuzziness of real life into the theater: it creates a new fuzziness of its own.

As insignificant as accidental relations are (in both senses of the word), they do have two cumulative effects. First, they create an underlying impression of randomness and complexity that contributes to the illusion of reality found in all except the most rigorously abstract of films. Since psychoanalytic theorists contend that the illusion of reality works to enthrall the viewer and obscure true subjectivity, it is important to note that—second—accidental relations prevent the completeness of the illusion. They do this not only by introducing extraneous and incongruous details but also through the basic condition of film, the separate mediation of sound and image. It is not the smooth simulacrum of reality but the ambiguity in the continually shifting background of sound-image relations that serves to hold the viewer-auditor's interest, promising suspense and surprise even where (as in such films as Brakhage's *Creation* or Sonbert's *Honor and Obey*[13]) there is no narrative.

Turning to all the possible relations above the threshold of detectability, I find it necessary to divide them into only three main types, which I call *structural*, *nodal*, and *disruptive*.

Structural relations are barely noticeable in themselves but form a cumulative pattern. In the simplest case, a particular tempo or intensity may predominate in one channel while the same or a different tempo or intensity predominates in the other channel, so that one basic relation persists or recurs throughout.[14] In Huston's *The Maltese Falcon* the images contain very little action; medium shots predominate; the prevailing tones are in the middle range; and there is a very limited number of settings (nearly all of them interiors). In contrast to this pervasive restraint, the sound track is dominated by a profusion of speech (much of it drawn directly from the Hammett novel). Speech flows without naturalistic hesitations even from slower speakers such as Cairo (Peter Lorre) and Gutman (Sidney Greenstreet), while it pours under continual pressure from Spade (Humphrey Bogart) and O'Shaughnessy (Mary Astor). The individual relations between image and sound, which can vary from scattered confirmations at one extreme (such as Archer [Jerome Cowan] silently meeting his unseen killer at night) to many strong oppositions at the other (such as Spade and Gutman fencing ver-

Both *The Maltese Falcon* (right) and *The Big Sleep* (left) have copious dialogue: in the former, this contrasts with the sparseness of characters and settings; in the latter, it underscores their abundance.

bally as they sit in armchairs), combine to form a predominant structural opposition—a tension between detached image and urgent sound.

Structural relations can reveal major differences between films that seem superficially alike. Hawks's *The Big Sleep*, for example, has much in common with *The Maltese Falcon*: it is based on a popular private-eye novel involving dubious characters and double-crossing, there is much rapid dialogue, and Bogart again stars as the private eye. But *The Big Sleep* has a far greater variety of settings, including many more exteriors, and the action shifts continually from place to place: for example, whereas Spade's office is the dominant setting of *The Maltese Falcon*, Marlowe's office appears only briefly. At the same time, the dialogue is distributed among a much larger cast in *The Big Sleep* than in *The Maltese Falcon*. The diversity of both sound and image establishes a paradoxically solid framework for the ramifying complexity of *The Big Sleep*: the dominant structural relation is confirmation.[15]

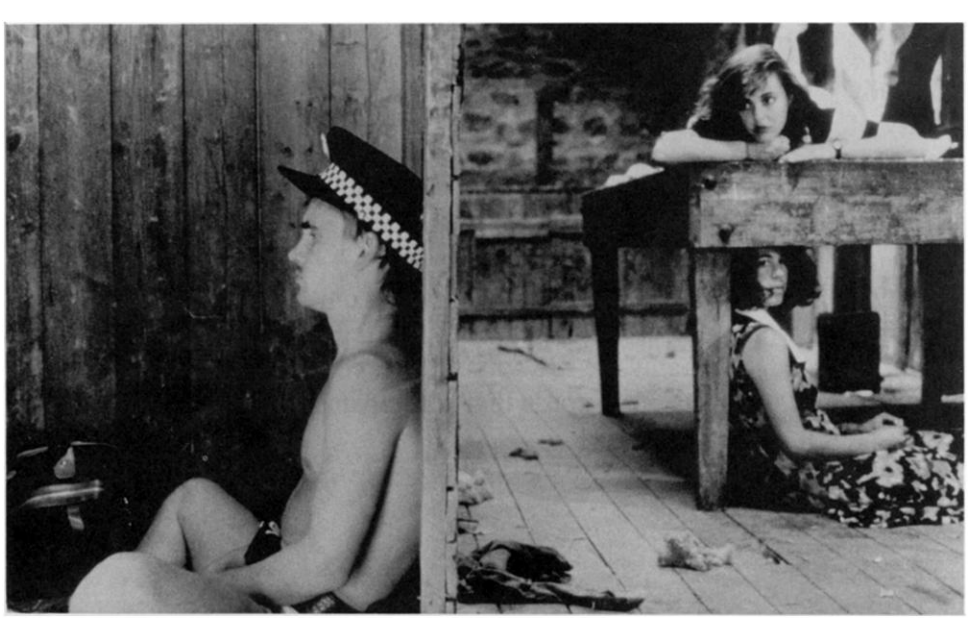
Unlike accidental and structural relations, whose effect is cumulative and depends at least as much on the change between relations as on each relation itself, the other two categories are more conspicuous and take effect individually. *Nodal relations* are those in which sound and image together convey a relevant meaning. Since these are the most easily recognized type (and were examined at some length in my earlier article[16]) I will give just one example—a simple example that nevertheless demonstrates some of the complexity that underlies all sound-image relations. In Green's *Baby Face* Barbara Stanwyck plays a woman who escapes from a sordid background by using sex to climb to wealth and security in a Wall Street bank. Each rise in position (and corporate lover) is summarized by an upward camera tilt from floor to floor outside the bank building together with a rising saxophone phrase. The sound-image relation is partly a confirmation (both are rising) and partly an opposition (visual sobriety vs. aural casualness), so that the summary is tinged with irony and humor.

If a conspicuous sound-image cluster does *not* seem relevant to the scene or sequence, or indeed seems to conflict with it, this constitutes a *disruptive relation*. An example occurs in Hitchcock's *Vertigo* when Judy (Kim Novak) recalls what happened after she ran up the mission tower: the image strip cuts from the shadowy stairway to a flat, brightly lit process shot in which Judy emerges onto the top of the tower and Elster (Tom Helmore), waiting with his wife's body, pushes it over the edge. Meanwhile the sound track continues with the same agitato music that accompanied the origi-

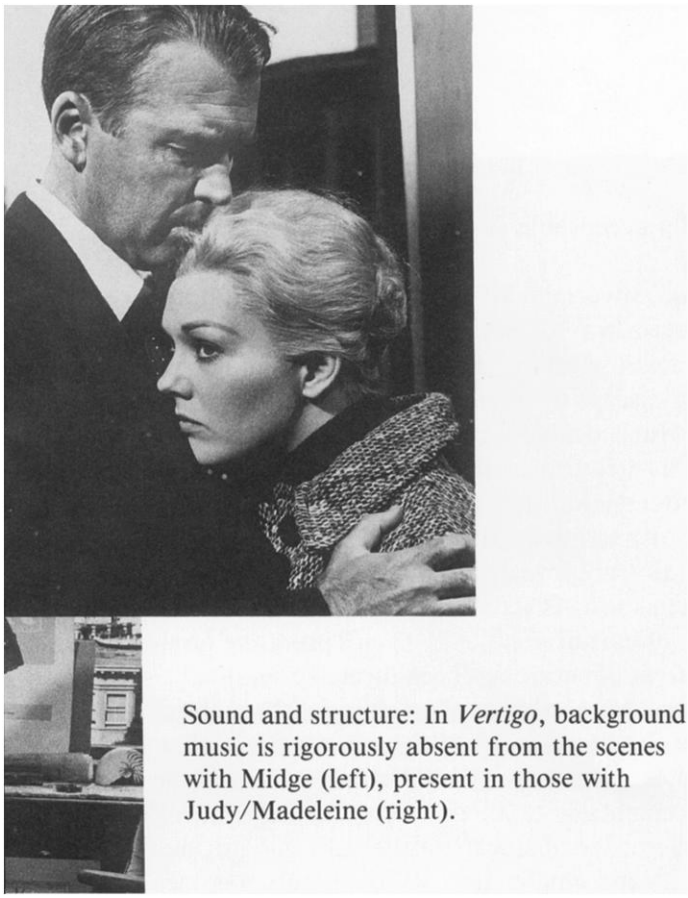
nal tower scene. This music belongs to a set of romantic passages that consistently represent the obsession of Scotty/Johnny (James Stewart) with Madeleine, since they begin with the first encounter in Ernie's Restaurant and break off when—and only when—practical and unmysterious Midge (Barbara Bel Geddes) is onscreen. In the flashback, however, the music accompanies a far less romantic image, and one that has no place in Johnny's obsession. Not only the technical crudity but also the sheer narrative perfunctoriness of the image jolts the viewer-auditor, who sees a ludicrously elaborate murder plot exposed in a few seconds. With its disruptive clash between aural tension and visual bathos, the flashback rips the occult veil from Madeleine's earlier behavior and switches the viewer-auditor's viewpoint from Johnny to Judy. Thus the disruptive relation reverberates through the entire film, enlarging both its fascination and its potential meaning.

It might be argued that I am reading too much into a scene whose visual crudity and perfunctoriness result merely from Hitchcock's lack of interest in its content, the film's Maguffin. As it happens, there are several other disruptive relations in *Vertigo* at the film's turning point (from Johnny's hospitalization to his encounter with Judy)[17]; but whether these too arise from accident or error is unimportant. It is not even necessary to invoke the deconstructionists' defense of errors and misreadings. As indicated above, the ground state of sound-image relations consists of accidental relations. These are multiple and random, overlapping and often conflicting with one another, and too profuse to come under the film-makers' full control; thus they can also conflict with the overt meaning of any scene in which they occur.[18] While the result in some narrative films may be incoherence or lack of conviction, in others the continual friction with naturalism may generate a new field of meaning or enjoyment.

In short, accident can play a positive role in all types of sound-image relations. Bennett's *Backlash*, for example, is dominated by what might be called *accidental-structural* relations. Two police officers arrest an aboriginal Australian woman for a murder she did not commit, drive her from Sydney back to the scene of the crime, and in the course of many misadventures come to befriend her and find the real murderer. The narrative is sometimes implausible and verges on a bland Stanley Kramer tract against prejudice. What redeems it is the gritty effect of a structural dissonance between images



Throughout the Australian film *Backlash*, there is a contrast between the precisely composed images and the partly improvised dialogue.



Sound and structure: In *Vertigo*, background music is rigorously absent from the scenes with Midge (left), present in those with Judy/Madeleine (right).

and sound track: the former are carefully composed and often beautiful, while the dialogue is to a large extent improvised and casual. Although Bennett could have planned this dissonance, a filmmaker is unlikely to consider that his own script needs to be saved by a continual dosage of contradictions. Siegel's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* illustrates an *accidental-nodal* relation after a woman declares that her uncle is no longer her uncle, although he looks and sounds the same. In scenes of the uncle mowing the lawn no attempt seems to have been made to have the bit player suggest any strangeness; both the performance and camerawork seem pedestrian. Yet in opposition to the niece's impassioned "He's not my uncle!" the blandness of the image becomes even more disquieting than any sinister display. As for *accidental-disruptive* relations, there are several examples in Fleming's *Bombshell*, in which movie star Lola Burns (Jean Harlow) finds her life continually being manipulated by her press agent Hanlon (Lee Tracy). The film opens with a crescendo of confusion as Burns confronts various demands and minor crises before leaving for the studio. Instead of following this with a quiet interlude that would let the humor sink in, the film cuts to a scene that begins at top pitch with a rival actress who rushes to an angry confrontation with Hanlon as he gabbles on the phone. Since the film's structure shows other kinds of weaknesses (for example, the slack subplot involving Burns's whim to adopt a baby) this disruptive confirmation is probably unintentional; yet such "errors" help to transform a routine screwball comedy into an unusual comedy of paranoia.

Although I believe that the disruptive relations in *Vertigo* derive less from accident than from Hitchcock's sense of the dynamics of the narrative film, this belief is not essential to my present argument. Whenever the ground state of accidental sound-image relations emerges in its most potent form, as disruption, it can force the viewer-auditor to reappraise what he or she is seeing and hearing. This is likely to enhance the film, no matter whether the disruption comes from error, planning, or serendipity.

Putting Theory to the Sound-Image Test

Many assertions about the nature of film are based either on the image alone or on the concept of a "perfect marriage" in which sound faithfully supports the image. This is true even when there is no mention of sound or image, as in Barthes's contention cited earlier that every element in a narrative is functional with respect to the narrative.

With more extended theories, the test of sound-image relations may prove damaging to different degrees. For example, any theory based on the concept of film as a kind of language invariably assumes that film consists of a single channel, like a succession of written letters or of spoken sounds, and the syntagmas and paradigms of that channel are invariably taken to be visual scenes. Here I focus on two well-known theories that draw on psychoanalysis. In general, the psychoanalytic approach reflects the lack of interest in sound (as distinct from language) that characterizes the work of Freud and Lacan. For example, Freud not only focused on images as the source of symbols in dreams but also depreciated the role of sound by asserting that speech in dreams regularly repeats speech heard in waking life.[19] With Lacan, the importance of the mirror stage in his theory of subjectivity has, when applied to film, kept the scales tipped in favor of the image. As Mary Ann Doane says, "Freudian and Lacanian texts appear to be privileged at least

partially for their ability to generate convincing scenarios which act as condensations of several larger psychical structures or as evocations of a particularly crucial 'turning point' or movement: the primal scene, the mirror stage, the 'look' at the mother's (castrated) body, the *fort/da* game, etc. Needless to say, many of these scenarios are chosen because they activate a specifically *visual* register."[20] It is not surprising that one of the most often quoted psychoanalytic studies of film contains this statement: "The film is what I receive . . . and I only need close my eyes to suppress it."[21]

A central postulate of much psychoanalytic theory is that (classical) film reinforces the viewer's illusory ego by presenting a world of apparent plenitude in which the film-maker's voice and methods of presentation are concealed. The most basic form of this postulate is the *theory of structure*.

As applied to film, suture began with the assertion that the viewer is sustained by the apparent plenitude of shot/reverse shot alternation.[22] This assumes not only that sound plays an insignificant role in the filmic experience but also that the shot is the sole basis of filmic structure. Although the structural dominance of the visual shot is rarely questioned[23] it is easy to do so; in *Vertigo*, for example, a major articulation occurs in mid-shot. As I mentioned earlier, incidental music is absent from the scenes featuring Midge and present in those where Johnny's obsession flourishes unchecked; the latter gradually become longer at the expense of the former to the point where, in one scene with Johnny and Midge, the music resumes as soon as Midge leaves the frame.

In any case, even in terms of the image alone, the assumption of the early suture theorists that classical cinema depended entirely on shot/reverse shot alternation was so far out of line with reality that it had to be modified to allow for other and more prevalent types of cuts, as well as fades and other visual interruptions. One modifier, Stephen Heath, remarked on the exclusion of sound but made no attempt to include it; he also gave the ideological game away by conceding that there was suture in a nonbourgeois film such as Akerman's *News from Home* but "it did not suture in the way of the system. . . ."[24] In short, since suture could not be aimed at techniques used exclusively by bourgeois cinema, it would be defined as innocuous with ideologically acceptable films and repressive with all the rest.

Kaja Silverman tried to find a less Humpty-Dumptyish way of saving the concept of suture. While acknowledging that classical films may continually disrupt the viewer's absorption—her analysis of Hitchcock's *Psycho* adduces almost as many breaks as I find disruptive relations in *Vertigo*—she contends that they retain their psychic grip by means of narrative: "the more the operations of enunciation are revealed to the viewing subject, the more tenacious is its desire for the comfort and closure of narrative. . . ."[25] At this point the original concept of suture has been turned around to become the *withholding* of plenitude throughout most of the film. Its final refuge, according to Silverman, is the ending: "The standard format of the classic cinematic text . . . disrupt[s] the existing symbolic order, dislocat[es] the subject-positions within it, and challeng[es] its ideals of coherence and fullness only in order subsequently to reaffirm that order, those positions, and those ideals."[26]

In many classic films, however, this so-called reaffirmation is flimsy or perfunctory, and made even more so by sound-image relations.[27] In Goulding's *The Flame Within* a woman psychiatrist (Ann Harding) declines the marriage proposal of a male colleague (Herbert Marshall) because he expects her to give up her practice. Right at the end, however, she accepts his proposal, and incidental music surges up as she leans her head on his shoulder. This strong confirmation was probably intended to be nodal, but because there has been no other incidental music since the opening credits the relation instead becomes disruptive, placing brackets around the "happy" ending and making it disposable. In Brown's *Possessed*[28] Marion (Joan Crawford) becomes the mistress of a prominent businessman, Mark (Clark Gable), who runs for political office. When his opponent makes a campaign issue of their relation, Marion announces that she will leave; but the film ends with Mark telling her that they will succeed or fail together. This reunion takes place on a street at night in a rainstorm, and the tender closeness of Marion and Mark is accompanied by the continuous hissing of rain—a sound that is new to the film. This unexpected opposition, like the confirmation in *The Flame Within*, becomes disruptive and places brackets around the ending.

Even without such brackets the assertion of sutured endings is unconvincing because it is based on two incorrect assumptions. First, Silverman appears to treat sound and image as a "perfect marriage": "The *totality* [my emphasis] of image and sound tracks permits it to engage simultaneously in the discourses of the unconscious and the preconscious."[29] Even in a later study that promises to focus on the sound track, Silverman does not reexamine this assumption. "As other writers have noted, Hollywood's sonic *vraisemblable* stresses unity and anthropomorphism. It subordinates the auditory to the visual track, nonhuman sounds to the human voice, and 'noise' to speech. It also contains the human voice within the fiction or diegesis. . . . The emphasis upon diegetic speech acts to suture the viewer/listener. . . . It is thus the sound analogue of the shot/reverse shot formation."[30] This attempt to depict sound as a simple reinforcement of visual suture in the classic Hollywood film overlooks the fact that, outside some documentaries and experimental films, diegetic speech is dominant in virtually all cinema—including antibourgeois films and most independent feminist films. In any case, as I stressed earlier, even synchronized speech is mediated separately from the image and may be postrecorded and/or manipulated in various ways: there is always a gap between the image strip and the sound track.

The second erroneous assumption involved in the concept of sutured endings is that the viewer-auditor experiences a film in "strikeover mode"—that nothing within the film leaves a durable mark on him or her but that each successive shot erases what has gone before. As Silverman puts it in another context, "the spectator is always caught up in the flow of cinematic images."[31] But of course there is no such soundless flow, and the cumulative effect of accidental and disruptive relations can leave a far stronger impression than a brief and contrived ending. Thus the ending of *Vertigo*, in which Judy is "justly" punished for complicity in murder, is far outweighed by the preceding disruptions that reveal the anger and insecurity beneath Johnny's romantic obsession with Madeleine.

Another psychoanalytic approach to film that has been developed in recent years, especially by feminist theorists, focuses on the (male) viewer's *gaze*. The contention here is that the classic film is steeped in patriarchy: the camera's view represents the male characters, while female characters are denied (or tightly restricted in) the power to view and are, instead, viewed. The effect of this is to relieve the male viewer's anxiety over lack or castration by (a) masking the lack of real objects on the screen and (b) displacing the lack of the phallus onto the female characters.[32]

By now it should be clear that a theory founded on only one of the two channels of film is precarious: to gain conviction it must, if it can, take into account the continual interaction of sound and image. Any such revision of the theory of the gaze would also have to deal with two further problems. First, if photographic realism is needed to mask a lack that would cause anxiety, why are animated cartoons popular? With animation, as I remarked earlier, the junction of sound and image is manifestly synthetic and there is no illusion of photographic reality. Second, there is a mismatch between the ultimate target of feminist theorists—patriarchal society—and their immediate target, the classic film. For example, the locus of power in a film cannot be determined solely by camera placement, framing, and the editing of the image strip, as a critic such as Doane assumes in her shot-by-shot analysis of sequences from Negulesco's *Humoresque*.[33] Voice quality and miking also play a crucial part, and so do the content and context of a scene. Thus a female character such as that played by Barbara Stanwyck in Preston Sturges's *The Lady Eve* or by Helen Vinson in Goulding's *Nightmare Alley* has more (personal) power than the male protagonist in large part because her voice is crisper and her speech more fluent. By contrast, when Stella Dallas (Stanwyck), at the end of King

Sound qualifies the gaze: In *The Lady Eve*, Barbara Stanwyck's crisp voice emphasizes her character's personal power over men.

Vidor's film of that name, looks in through the window at her successfully married daughter, she has the view but certainly not the social power. Often the locus of power is more elusive, as in Cukor's *Girls About Town*, about two women, Wanda (Kay Francis) and Marie (Lilyan Tashman), who make a living as escorts. Within their culturally subordinate positions Wanda and Marie continually gain control over men as individuals, and this ambiguity emerges in the sound track and image strip, which sometimes are in direct conflict. Thus the film opens with the camera following the two women as they enter the powder room of a nightclub to repair their make-up. While the image may seem to be pandering to the male voyeur or fetishist, the sound track is doing something quite different: the women are making critical and derisive remarks about the two businessmen who have hired them for the evening (and whose clumsy passes they later elude). Certainly a critic who assumes that power resides in the image will miss the irony of a scene in which Marie teaches another client (Eugene Pallette) to whistle a tune—a reversal of power in what was considered to be a male accomplishment.

A scene in Whale's comedy-mystery *Remember Last Night?* offers an even more direct challenge to the theory of the male gaze. The female lead (Constance Cummings) knocks out a police aide and, with the help of two other women, drags him away by the ankles; they pass either side of a pillar, against which his crotch collides, until they backtrack and maneuver him to a closet. Meanwhile a church bell begins to clang as soon as the aide is knocked out and continues through the rest of the image scene. Beyond the physical implication of the aide's brief contact with the pillar, psychoanalytic theorists will be aware that it represents, in Lacanian terms, his illusory possession of the phallus. The sound track reinforces the physical implication by its unexpected sonority; as for its psychoanalytic implication, "bell" is a near-homophone of "ball," the suspension of bells resembles that of testicles, and both "clanger" and "clapper" are obsolescent British slang terms for "testicle" (director Whale was British). This passage, surely, is not defense but a castrative revel.

Although theorists of the gaze might try to dismiss the foregoing example as a comic exception to the rule, its insistent and narratively unmotivated layer of sound gives it unusual emphasis. By focusing on the image to the virtual exclusion of sound, theorists can too easily see only what they expect to see. Their confusion between the dynamics of the classic film and the dominant culture in which it operates may well derive from the 1934 Production Code, which attempted to impose the latter rigidly on the former. Thus Doane confidently asserts that "prostitution is absolutely irrecuperable [in the classic film]" although a single pre-Code film is enough to refute her. In Buzzell's *Virtue* an ex-hooker, Mae (Carole Lombard), marries a cab driver, Jimmy (Pat O'Brien), who fancies himself as an expert on women and believes she worked as a secretary. When the truth emerges he is shattered at first but then decides to honor the marriage. Mae, however, accuses him of still treating her with underlying suspicion and resentment; she insists on —and eventually obtains—complete acceptance.

Virtue is particularly relevant to sound-image relations because it contains two major disruptive passages that echo the disruptive content. After their city hall marriage, Mae and Jimmy are caught up in a group of press photographers who are following and taking flash pictures of three politicians. The viewer-auditor is likely to assume (*à la* Barthes) that this incident serves a narrative function—that one of the politicians will be a former john of Mae's, or that she will be recognized from appearing in a published photo—but Jimmy's discovery of her past comes from an entirely different source. The explosion of activity in both the image (rapid movement, flashes) and the sound (footsteps, overlapping voices) is almost pure disruption. The other major passage is a melodramatic subplot involving one of Mae's fellow hookers, who prevails on Mae to lend her some of the household savings for medical treatment but is actually working a scam at the insistence of her crooked boyfriend. At one point Mae goes to demand the money back while Jimmy suspiciously follows her. It is night and heavy rain is falling. On the window shade of the hooker's apartment Jimmy sees the silhouettes of what he takes to be Mae and a man embracing; in fact it is the boyfriend holding the body of the hooker, whom he has hit and accidentally killed. Later Jimmy sees the boyfriend silhouetted against the frosted glass door of a bathroom and

A sudden flurry of movement and sound creates a disruptive scene in *Virtue*: After a cabbie marries an ex-prostitute posing as a secretary, they find themselves confronting the media—whose interest is in the city pols in the background.

immediately recognizes him as the man in the window. Both passages are marked by unusual sound-image relations: in the former, the sound of rainfall (which, as in *Possessed*, occurs nowhere else in the film) accompanying a patch of bright light amid darkness; in the latter, Jimmy's sudden shout accompanying the appearance of the silhouette as the bathroom light is switched on. Although it is easy to dismiss the subplot as implausible and redundant, the disruptive sound-image relations enlarge its impact. They crack open the smooth unfolding of the main narrative and challenge the viewer-auditor to fit the subplot into the film's structure and meaning—to find, for example, that it represents a drama within Jimmy as he comes to recognize how his hurt pride and suspicion made him a would-be killer of Mae. *Virtue* demonstrates how the complexity of the narrative film and of its sound-image relations can make it as much an obstacle to as a vehicle for the patriarchal culture in which it is created.[34]

Taking Stock

Although my analysis of sound-image relations and their effects applies to all types of films, including animation, documentary, and experimental, I have focused mainly on the classic Hollywood film because that is the source of examples favored by most current theorists. It also happens to be part of the broader realm in which sound-image relations are most easily misperceived—the photographic narrative in general, regardless of origin or ideology. In any discussion of the photographic narrative the realistic illusion plays such a central role—whether accepted or challenged—that the equally important role of sound-image relations in the film itself is easily overlooked. The interplay between *what* is seen and heard and *how* it is seen and heard is the basis for any full understanding of a film.

This interplay is often marked by tension or disparity. As I have shown, there is also much tension and disparity on the basic level of sound-image re-

lations, thanks to the separate mediation of the two channels. Such dualisms are typical of film in all its aspects, whether aesthetic, social, or economic. Film is ephemeral but repeatable; full of apparent movement but devoid of movement; a young medium that is already a relic of the mechanical age; the product of a multi-million dollar industry or of a loner working on a shoestring; immediate in its impact yet always presenting the past. Such polarities may account for the fascination of narrative film more convincingly than current psychoanalytic theories. After all, why do so many critics of bourgeois ideology reach back 40 or 50 years for their filmic examples? One plausible reason is that they themselves are fascinated by the dynamics of the classic film, which is usually shorter and filled with more incident (often digressive) than recent commercial films, so that the interplay between narrative and sound-image relations is more intense.

The separate unfolding of the sound track and image strip gives every film a head start toward Bakhtin's dialogic imagination. Many films, of course, fail to go any farther, and others advance only a few steps here and there. But even the most routine narrative contains forces that can fissure its self-imposed limits.

Notes

1. *The Liberation of Echo: A New Hearing for Film Sound, Film Quarterly*, v. XXXVIII, no. 4, Summer 1985, pages 2–12. This article will be referred to as FS1.
2. In "In Defense of Talking Film," *Persistence of Vision*, no. 5, Spring 1987, pages 17–27, Mary Devereaux demonstrates the importance of sound (dialogue) in an apparently image-dominated sequence of Hitchcock's *Notorious*. In *A Life in Movies: An Autobiography* (New York, 1987), while praising silent movies (e.g., page 168), Michael Powell also reveals his concern with sound in *Edge of the World* (page 258), *One of Our Aircraft Is Missing* (pages 289–91), *A Canterbury Tale* (page 448), *I Know Where I'm Going* (page 537), and *Black Narcissus* (pages 581–5).
3. Of course, the image can have its own excesses, as with the 1960s epidemic of rapid cutting, freeze frames, and the like.
4. Thus in "Moving Lips: Cinema As Ventriloquism," *Yale French Studies*, no. 60, 1980, pages 67–79, Rick Altman asserts the importance of sound by transferring primacy to it from the image. (Subsequently Altman reverted almost completely to belief in image primacy: see note 10.) Roy Armes, in "Entendre, C'est Comprendre: In Defence of Sound Reproduction," *Screen*, v. 29, no. 2, Spring 1988, pages 8–22, ends his often perceptive analysis by arbitrarily dividing film into two realms, one ruled by the image and the other by sound: "The image may rule in conventional narrative, but documentary is self-evidently a form in which the diegesis is verbal."
5. There is a paradoxical analogy between the assumption that, in film, sound is inferior to image and the general assumption challenged by Derrida that writing is inferior to speech.
6. As Gerald Mast points out, most theorists have ignored animation when defining film (*Film/Cinema/Movie: A Theory of Experience*, Chicago and London, 1977/1983, page 4).
7. See FS1, pages 6–8, for fuller details.
8. These are in fact the kinds of relations that I chose mainly to discuss in FS1.
9. Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, Bloomington and London, 1976, especially the summary on pages 233–4.
10. There is, for example, no challenge to image-bound segmentation or coding in *Genre: The Musical*, ed. Rick Altman (London, Boston and Henley, 1981), even in Raymond Bellour's "Segmenting/Analysing," pages 102–133, or in Altman's critique of Bellour, page 203. In Altman's later study, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987), his only new statement about the role of sound is summed up thus: "The traditional classical narrative hierarchy of image over sound is reversed at the climactic moments of the musical" (page 109). A decade earlier, in challenging the widespread acceptance of Christian Metz's *grande syntagmatique*, Brian Henderson had noted its failure to deal with such elements as sound and questioned the possibility of establishing any systematic coding of film as a whole ("Segmentation," *Film Quarterly*, v. XXXI no. 1, Fall 1977, pages 57–65).
11. Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, New York, 1977, page 89.
12. Such a change may depend on the viewer-auditor's altered perception of a sound or image element that remains the same. In Hathaway's *Kiss of Death*, when Nick (Victor Mature) crouches in hiding in a shadowy corner of his house, the highlight on his white-shirted figure seems to turn him into a flat and abstract shape. And in Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad*, an indirect remark in the dialogue turns a percussive sound that seems to form part of the incidental music into the diegetic chiming of a clock.
13. These are, of course, "silent" films, and unlike commercial films of the era before synchronized sound they are projected without any separate music accompaniment. I cite them as a reminder that silence is itself a sound element that interacts with the image.
14. In FS1, my remarks about the use of sound and image in Naruse's *Meshi* and the films of Ozu and Vertov were about structural relations.
15. Here, as with many films, sound-image relations provide a supplementary tool for evaluating films. If *The Maltese Falcon* seems the better *noir* film, it may be not merely because it deals continually with loss, failure, and rejec-

tion and has an appropriately downbeat ending but also because its structural opposition endows it with a continuous underlying tension that *The Big Sleep* lacks.

16. The examples on pages 7–9 of FS1 are all nodal, though not identified as such.
17. Several of these occur after Johnny's hospitalization, when the emphasis begins to shift from the romantic mystery of the first half of the film to the human tension of the second half. For example, Johnny's discharge from hospital is represented by a pan across sunlit white houses together with incidental music that progresses from a romantic combination of strings, woodwind, and harp to a triumphant orchestral tutti. Although Johnny is ostensibly cured, he is still obsessed with the "dead" Madeleine, and the sudden euphoric confirmation is disconcerting.
18. Even the most minimal of abstract films cannot exclude accidental relations that result from the grain of the film stock, from scratches and other visual flaws, and (if the film has a sound track) from background noise, all of which play an increasingly prominent role as the visual and aural content is reduced. Landow's *Film That Rises to the Surface of Clarified Butter* is a study in the shifting relations between such cumulative accidents and continuous silence.
19. This assertion occurs many times; for example, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, *Jensen's "Gradiva," Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, and *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. In my experience Freud was wrong; but in any case the role of sound in dreams proves nothing about its role in films.
20. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987, page 14.
21. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier*, Bloomington, 1982, page 51. While Metz intermittently mentions sound —e.g., he refers parenthetically to the signifier of the film flux as "images accompanied by sound and movement" (page 124)—it plays virtually no role in his psychoanalytic theorizing.
22. See Jean-Pierre Oudart, "Cinema and Suture," *Screen*, v. 18 no. 4, Winter 1977–8, pages 35–47; and Daniel Dayan, "The Tutor-code of Classical Cinema," *Film Quarterly*, v. XXVIII no. 1, Fall 1974, pages 22–31.
23. As Kaja Silverman puts it: "Theoreticians of cinematic suture . . . are . . . in fundamental accord with Noël Burch's remark that 'Although camera movements, entrances into and exits from frame, composition and so on can all function as devices aiding in the organization of the film object . . . the shot transition [remains] the basic element [of that organization].' Shot relations are seen as the equivalent of syntactic ones in linguistic discourse, as the agency whereby meaning emerges and a subject-position is constructed for the viewer" (*The Subject of Semiotics*, New York, 1983, page 201).
24. Stephen Heath, *Questions of Cinema*, Bloomington, 1981, page 100.
25. Silverman, op. cit., page 213.
26. Ibid., page 221. In *Mythologies* (New York, 1972, page 41) Barthes had generalized this format as "Operation Margarine," citing as a cinematic example the shifting attitudes toward the military in Zinnemann's *From Here to Eternity*.
27. In films such as LeRoy's *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* and Mayo's *Black Legion*, of course, along with such comedies as *Bombshell* and Conway's *Red Headed Woman*, there is no reaffirmation at all.
28. Not to be confused with Bernhardt's later film of the same title, also with Joan Crawford.
29. Silverman, op. cit., page 85.
30. Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988, page 45.
31. Op. cit., page 23.
32. This is an admittedly bald summary. In its details, however, the theory of the male gaze, originally due to Laura Mulvey, varies from one writer to another: compare, for example, Teresa de Lauretis in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington, 1984), Silverman in *The Acoustic Mirror*, Doane in *The Desire to Desire*, and Tania Modleski in *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York and London, 1988). In any case, it is not so much the psychoanalytic details that are at issue here as the importance attached to the image.
33. Doane, op. cit., page 97ff.
34. Modleski, op. cit., is one feminist critic who does acknowledge this kind of complexity.

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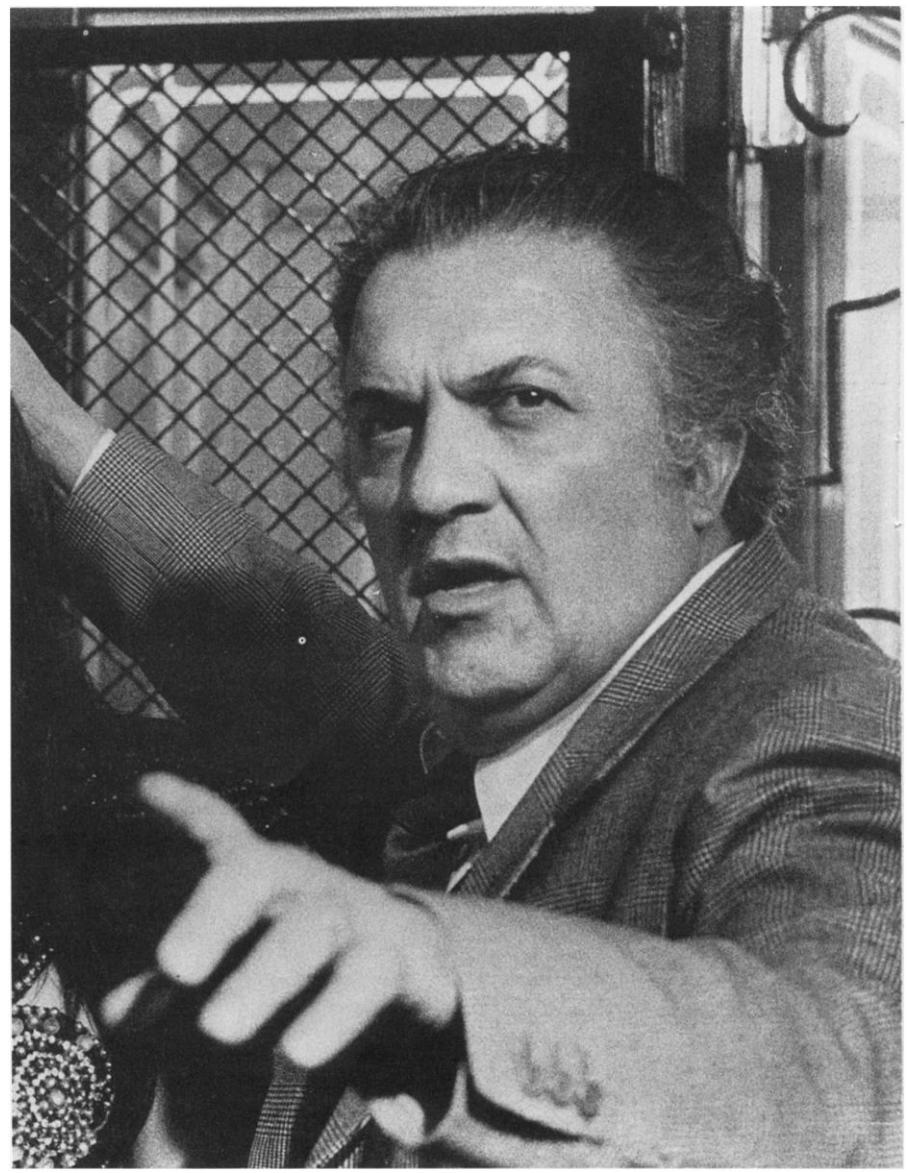
We should suspend the typical questions: how does a free subject penetrate the density of things and endow them with meaning. . . . Rather we should ask: under what conditions and through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit . . . ? In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse.

—MICHEL FOUCAULT (118)

The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his book . . . in the same relation of antecedence as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not subject with the book as predicate. . . .

—ROLAND BARTHES (145)



Fellini: Entirely positioned within and produced by the multiple discourses that are "Roma."

Frank Burke

Fellini: Changing the Subject

The career of Federico Fellini offers remarkable parallels to the recent history of individualism and the subject, especially in the domain of film theory. Particularly evident is the concurrence of Fellini's reputation and the fate of *auteurism*: 1954 was the year of *La Strada* and of Truffaut's promulgation of a *politique des auteurs*; 1959 saw the shooting of *La Dolce Vita* and the emergence of the French New Wave; 1962–63 brought *8 1/2* and Andrew Sarris's influential "Notes on the Auteur Theory."

Without question, Fellini's reputation benefited by an *auteurist* moment which valorized the film director as artist, gave strong impetus to the European art film movement, and, in so doing, aligned itself with the tradition of high modernism in the arts—privileging the uniqueness of artistic self-expression as an oppositional force in the face of industrialized society.

To some extent, that reputation was sustained through the sixties by proliferating *auteurism* (Sarris's book *American Film Directors* appeared in

1968), high modernism, and perhaps most important, the romantic individualism of the decade, which dovetailed with the media image of Fellini as a maverick and genius.

However, despite Fellini's continued visibility, his critical reputation peaked with *8 1/2*, especially among academic theorists. From the mid-sixties on, that reputation has suffered virtually uninterrupted decline. Robert Phillip Kolker is representative when he writes in the early eighties that "*8 1/2* . . . marks the end of [Fellini's] creative period. . . . In his following works, Fellini moved into the artifice of spectacle, the fantasies of memory, which became more insular and repetitive as he proceeded" (87). More telling than critique is neglect. In the 600-plus pages of *Movies and Methods* I, Fellini receives one paragraph of discussion. His name does not appear once in *Movies and Methods* II nor (as far as I can tell) in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader.*[1] These three anthologies delineate with great accuracy the critical and theoretical terrain of film studies for the past two decades.

Just as Fellini's international recognition corresponded with the rise of *auteurism* and the European art film movement, his decline has paralleled theirs. The sixties was marked by the structuralist and poststructuralist de-centering of the subject, the politicization of film theory and practice following May 1968, and an assault on the high art/mass culture hierarchy of modernism. By the early seventies, as the result of *auteur*-structuralism (Nowell-Smith, Eckert, Wollen) and post-*auteurism* (*Cahiers du cinéma*, Heath) the *auteur* was killed off as creative artist and resurrected as merely one system of codes among many or as the radically dispersed effect of ideological gaps and contradictions. Dead along the way was the European art cinema of the "great directors."

This is hardly to say that Fellini has been ignored only because the *auteurism* of the fifties and sixties has dissolved. Some directors, such as Hitchcock and Ford, have been reappropriated by post-*auteurism* because of the psychoanalytic and ideological richness of their work. Others, such as Ozu and Oshima, have been privileged because of their non-Western signifying practices. And, ironically, Godard has acquired greater *auteur* status than ever because his politics have been so consistent with those of anti- and post-*auteurism*. Fellini's decline has occurred largely because, in a post-modernist, post-romantic, and post-*auteur* climate, he is seen as the embodiment of the purely reactionary. As Kolker puts it:

> Fellini slipped back to a melodramatic mode . . . an autobiographical expression . . . with history relegated to a backdrop and nostalgia elevated above analysis. He returns to a romanticism that insists that the productions of the artist's life and imagination must be of interest simply because they are the productions of the artist. . . . [T]he neo-realist urge to reveal and question has disappeared beneath an irrelevant . . . subjectivity. (87–89)

For Nöel Carroll: "Fellini's reflexivity only subserves the propagation of his world view. . . . Indeed, one suspects that Fellini's intrusiveness in [*The Clowns* and *Roma*] . . . enables him to get away with his shameless exploitation of shopworn, universalist (clown as man; city as life) imagery" (105).

These critiques are surprisingly subject-centered —attacking Fellini for, among other things, autobiography, nostalgia, subjectivity, world view, and insidious motive. Focusing on the reviled *auteur*, they say little about the films themselves. In conjunction with the widespread neglect of Fellini's work, they reflect a failure to acknowledge that, just as Fellini's early films formed part of the discourse of a prestructuralist era, his more recent films are part of poststructuralist discourse. In fact, from *8 1/2* on, Fellini's films have lent themselves to sustained critiques of romantic individualism and to a thorough-going revaluation of subjectivity. His "autobiographical" films, moreover, have posited Fellini himself as subject only to dissolve him into other texts, subject positions, and intersecting discourses. Nowhere is Fellini the *auteur* more dead than in his own work.

Fellini's earliest films focus principally on the exploits of well defined main characters—whether comic (Checco in *Variety Lights* [1950], Ivan and Wand in *The White Sheik* [1952]), tragic (Zampanò in *La Strada* [1954], Augusto in *Il Bidone* [1955]), or somewhere in between (Moraldo in *I Vitelloni* [1953], Marcello in *La Dolce Vita* [1959]). Fellini's emphasis on character is consistent with his oft-expressed concern with individuality—especially in

contrast to what he sees as the collectivity of conventional existence.

> Self-acceptance can occur only when you've grasped one fundamental fact of life: that the only thing which exists is yourself, your true individual self in depth, which wants to grow spontaneously, but which is fettered by inoperative lies, myths and fantasies proposing an unattainable morality or sanctity or perfection. . . . (Fellini, *Playboy* 60)

Individuality attains its fullest expression in the early films with *The Nights of Cabiria* (1956). Cabiria's film-long struggle for "self-acceptance" culminates with an extreme close-up which individuates her from all else in her world and appears to offer striking testimony to Fellini's conviction that "every human being has [her] own irrevocable truth, which is authentic and precious and unique . . ." (Fellini, *Playboy* 63).[2]

While Fellini's early films are decidedly individualist in emphasis, his comments about individualism are most intense not during the early period but during the making of *8 1/2* and *Juliet of the Spirits* (1965).[3] This creates an interesting paradox because it is precisely with *8 1/2* that I feel we can detect a radical change in the nature of characterization in Fellini's films—a process I might term "postindividualization." This process characterizes all Fellini's work from *8 1/2* through *Roma* (1972) but can best be examined in light of the death of the author/subject in more recent Fellini films: *Amarcord* (1974) through *Intervista* (1987).

> Through reproductive technology postmodernist art dispenses with the aura. The fiction of the creating subject gives way to the frank confiscation, quotation, excerptation, accumulation and repetition of already existing images. Notions of originality, authenticity and presence . . . are undermined.
>
> —DOUGLAS CRIMP (53)

In contrast to nearly all Fellini's preceding films, *Amarcord* has only an intermittent main character, Titta, who does not serve as a center of consciousness. He is absent from several episodes, some of them quite lengthy. He narrates only one —and that for only a moment. And he is supplemented, by several narrators who vary radically in articulateness, storytelling motivation, and credibility. There is, in short, no unified voice, and despite the fact that "amarcord" means "I remember,"[4] there *is* no I who remembers.

Fellini's Casanova (1976) may seem to offer such an "I": Casanova is both protagonist and presumed author of his tale. However, his function as narrator is intermittent to the point of virtual irrelevance, he is portrayed as a posturer and sycophant rather than a creative artist, and the world he inhabits is one of blatant simulation rather than originality.

Both *Amarcord* and *Fellini's Casanova*, though in different ways, fulfil Linda Hutcheon's description of point of view in postmodern fiction: "Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate . . . or resolutely provisional and limited—often undermining their own seeming omniscience" (11).

The Orchestra Rehearsal (1979) lacks even *Casanova*'s simulation of individuality, as the orchestra becomes a dominant metaphor for collectivity. Not only is there no main character, *all* the characters end up defined entirely in terms of their musical instruments and, even more restrictively, in terms of a piece of music composed by an absent ("dead") author. The conductor, who assumes the role of author-ity by film's end, is no less constructed and determined in his actions than anyone else. He is there because every orchestra needs its leader.

Amarcord *Orchestra Rehearsal*

City of Women: Marcello as dream's product.

City of Women (1980), like *Fellini's Casanova*, initially seems to offer authorizing human agency: Snaporaz as main character, and even more important Marcello as dreamer of the dream. However, in a crucial reversal, Marcello is established not as source of the dream but as its product. We begin *in medium somnium*, and Marcello only exists as a waking individual (briefly) at the very end. (In fact there is an implicit distinction drawn between "Snaporaz," the character in the dream, and "Marcello"—the "real" character—to whom Snaporaz, in effect, gives birth.) Moreover, the dream, like the orchestra, is a determining device, fixing Snaporaz/Marcello within the mechanism of the unconscious, fuelled by culturally generated projections and distortions of "Women." The culminating symbol of the feminine within the dream—an absurd Madonna/Soubrette balloon, complete with a womblike basket into which Snaporaz crawls—is a grotesque conflation of cultural symbology which violently undermines any notion of integral imagination on the part of its fabricator. (The film's title further underscores the fact that the women represented in the dream are not the unique creation of a free imagination. They are "always already citified"—manmade, socially constructed.)

And the Ship Sails On (1984) recalls *The Orchestra Rehearsal* in its use of a musical community—this time operatic—to construct individuals in roles. (The ship's hierarchy also serves as a determining social structure.) As in *The Orchestra Rehearsal*, characters are determined by dead author-ity—in this case Edmea Tetua, whose death they are mourning with varying degrees of fervor. Moreover, the authority and identity of Tetua (her ashes) exist only to be *scattered* (the goal of the opera troupe's sea voyage). Authority is further undermined within the film's narrative structure by the arbitrary, sporadic, and quite absurd role of the film's narrator/journalist, Orlando. He himself is "scattered" or fragmented, becoming most important as *narrator* when he loses all capacity to *report*. (His narrative voice dominates the last few minutes of the film but only in the form of pure speculation, as he is forced to compensate with mere hypotheses for his absence from all the final crucial events aboard the ship.) The split within Orlando highlights the interplay between fiction and history throughout *And the Ship Sails On*, as the film blatantly fictionalizes the sinking of the Lusitania and the outbreak of World War I. This interplay undercuts the authority of artist (Fellini) as well as historian (journalist/narrator), for the fictionality of the film cannot escape the discourse of history, and the historically "real" cannot escape the discourse of fiction. Put another way, the film's fictionality reflects the journalist's "pure speculation" at the end: both are conditioned by actual events, without deriving any authority from them. In addition, there is no position outside the ceaseless play and mutual determination of fact and fiction from which a text, artist, or commentator can be author-ized.

Ginger and Fred (1986)—both the title and the film—promise then withhold individuality. While the title offers us two personal names which imply differentiated figures, those figures are named after other figures who themselves adopted stage names.[5] Moreover, Ginger and Fred have been virtually reinvented by television to come to Rome and imitate their past imitations of Astaire and Rogers. The world of *Ginger and Fred* is one of endless replication, of copies without originals, in which "lookalikes" become the stars of the day. Within

this context, even Marcello Mastroianni and Giulietta Masina become "lookalikes"—allusions to their prior roles in Fellini films. The remark which a woman presumably addresses to Fellini at the beginning of *City of Women* would, with the addition of Giulietta's name, well apply here: "Marcello yet again? Please maestro."

"Fellini yet again?" could be the epigraph for *Intervista*, as Fellini functions not as a "real person" or even an "auteur" so much as a reproduction. He appears as the recycled product of his own films of forty years, of "memories" which exist only as cinematic representations, of the history of cinema, of the music of Nino Rota, of Cinécittà. Living in a world of reproduction, Fellini can be replaced as director. Mastroianni, dressed as Mandrake the Magician, "creates" the Trevi fountain scene in *La Dolce Vita*, making it appear on a makeshift screen in Anita Ekberg's house. As this sequence suggests, Fellini's relationship to his recreated memories and (other) staged fantasies is hardly simple or consistent. Not only is he not always positioned as their author, but often (as with Marcello and his dream in *City of Women*) he appears generated out of them. Despite the seeming centrality of Fellini, his subjectivity is, for the most part, a series of momentary configurations forming and dissolving across a grid of cinematic quotations from Fellini's and Cinécittà's cinematic history.[6]

Turning to *8 1/2*, we initially seem to have a story of individuation along the lines of *The Nights of Cabiria*.[7] The film begins with Guido's literal and figurative awakening and with his acquisition of identity: his body and face gradually emerge from beneath bedclothes and robe, and he moves to the bathroom to discover himself in the mirror. Much of the remainder of the film traces the expansion of Guido's identity, awareness, control, and inventiveness as he moves from dreams (unconscious hence uncontrolled by Guido as conscious subject) to memories (conscious but merely recollective) to visions (conscious and creative). He also becomes more responsible, more accountable to himself and to others. The final scene, in which his lifetime companions join him in the circus arena, can be seen as a moment of integration.

However, *8 1/2* centers Guido only in order to disperse him. The more aware Guido becomes, the more he must face his own confusion and instability. Moreover, though he appears to develop the capacity to create his own reality—as in the harem sequence and the screen tests—his visions turn against him, revealing that his desire to control reality is a fundamental limitation. He is, in fact, stripped of his authorship. By the end of the harem sequence, he is positioned as spectator not creator, and he is severely troubled by the image and voice of Luisa which comprise the spectacle. At the screen tests he is confronted by his directorial follies, reduced again to a spectator, and helpless to make any decisions about his film.

Not only does Guido acquire a certain measure of authority only to lose it, he undergoes a multiplication of identities that radically de-centers him. At the screen tests there are at least four Guidos: the director who created the test footage, the director-actor whom we see on screen, and the spectator who himself is divided in two: the "ideal" Guido who whispers "I love you" to Luisa, and the "real" Guido who "lies with every breath" (the words of an actress playing Luisa onscreen, which appropriately describe Guido-as-unfaithful-husband).

The de-authorization and splitting of Guido leads to a crucial loss of subjectivity in the press conference vision that follows upon the screen tests. He has just renounced his film to Claudia Cardinale when the vision suddenly erupts. It is not, however, attributed to Guido. In fact, the point-of-view coding (close-up of Guido, memory or fantasy, return to Guido) which has characterized earlier imaginative sequences is pointedly sabotaged. The vision is preceded with a close-up not of Guido but of Cardinale (first in darkness, then suddenly illuminated by the headlights of a car). This not only eliminates Guido as source, it eliminates subjective origin altogether by offering the impossible: Claudia as author. The film then cuts to a relatively long shot of Guido (with Claudia), turning and shielding himself with his hat. Guido is presented only as the target, not as the creator, of this eruption. And, of course, the lengthy vision does not conclude with any (re)establishing close-up of Guido.

Guido does not just passively suffer loss of author-ity and subject-hood. In renouncing his film, he begins contributing actively to the process. He effectively kills off his film's "hero" who has become a surrogate self. (His hero in effect fails

him, creating a complex mirroring effect: Fellini has trouble making a film about a character who has trouble making a film about a character who cannot sustain the role of hero.)[8] Then, at the press conference, Guido kills himself off more directly (though still symbolically): climbing under a table, putting a gun to his head, and pulling the trigger. Then, in the final vision/sequence, he dies by immersion or absorption. In so doing, he recapitulates the loss of subjectivity that is so crucial to the film as a whole. Though Guido is placed at the origin of the final vision through a medium close-up, he quickly moves from subject to object as he enters the circus ring and becomes a character ("the director"). He then surrenders his role as director, joining Luisa and the circle of lifetime companions in a dance of death as well as reunion. Finally, he disappears—as does the child-in-white (another surrogate Guido) who briefly replaces him in the circus arena. By the end of this vision—which is also the end of the film—there is no Guido for the camera to return to. In fact, there is no subjective source of anything.

This reading is strongly at odds with prevailing critical opinion of subjectivity in *8 1/2*. In *Reflexivity in Film and Literature* Robert Stam maintains: "The most striking feature of *8 1/2* . . . is the absolute centrality of Guido. . . . There is virtually no sequence . . . which Guido does not dominate" (104). And, in *Point of View in the Cinema*, Edward Branigan insists that "Fellini's *8 1/2* . . . despite a startling, even virtuoso mixture of fantasy and reality, remains committed to the assumptions of traditional subjective narration" because it "finds its center in a single character or, more exactly, the consciousness of a character" (143, 144). While Stam's discussion of *8 1/2* is brief, Branigan's is carefully argued and merits a response.

Branigan bases much of his reading on scenes early in the film when Guido is, indeed, developing consciousness and point of view (146–47, 151–52). He chooses as his quintessential example of *8 1/2*'s "activity of narration" a moment that occurs less than half way through the film (163–64). In overdetermining the early scenes, Branigan fails to account for narrative progression—especially Guido's loss of authority towards the film's end. For this reason, he merely dismisses the increasing fragmentation and multiplication of identities: "It is important . . . not to overstate the plurality achieved in *8 1/2*" (152). Moreover, he fails to note the rupture of point-of-view coding in the press conference sequence—a fact which is quite surprising given his scrupulous attention to such coding when Guido fantasizes the hanging of Daumier a few minutes earlier in the film.

8 1/2

Branigan also fails to attend to the construction and dissolution of subjectivity in the final sequence. In fact, he abandons his close reading of cinematic technique altogether. Instead, he posits an elaborate "semantic square" to argue that *8 1/2* ends in a "*positive* transcendence" which "presents Art as the ultimate mediation between reality and fantasy" and a "resolution on a 'higher' plane of reality." Art "is offered as that term which is not limited by time, history or social condition. Through Art the text asserts its immortality." Through this transcendence "the confusion of reality is reconciled with the private meaning of Guido's fantasies. . . . Thus the film becomes, crucially, a working out of the precise status of the author with respect to reality, imagination, text, subject (consciousness), and the other terms" (161).[9]

Branigan's discussion is not only mystifying (especially in terms of his earlier treatment of the film), it entails a telling contradiction. Given his own insistence that Art becomes the encompassing term under which all else is subsumed, Branigan cannot logically claim that the film is equally "a working out of the precise status of the author . . . ." Capital A Art and an individual artist are two quite different things, with the latter clearly

subordinate to the former. What Branigan appears to be doing is seeking a term (Art) which enables him to resurrect the artist (Guido) despite the artist's obvious demise. Branigan's strategy actually confirms the fact that, by the end, Guido (the subject/author) is gone—and something (or perhaps nothing) else has taken his place.

Finally, in failing to trace the crucial shifts that occur in the final sequences of the film, Branigan remains tied to the assumption of a stable ground for Guido's subjectivity:

> the text never stops making sense with respect to a 'reality.' We know, for instance, that Guido is having trouble with his wife, that he has a mistress, that he is attempting to make a film, and so forth. The origin of the unreal is always located in Guido and referenced to a privileged, non-subjective level of narration which is, exactly, *reality* for the text. . . . (52)

This assumption refuses to acknowledge, among other things, that Guido's mistress never appears as a "real" person once the harem sequence begins (45 minutes before the film concludes), the real Luisa never reappears after telling Guido to go to hell at the screen tests, and the film is abandoned. Also ignored is the fact that the press conference and the concluding sequence function precisely to strip away both the "privileged . . . *reality*" Branigan insists upon and any equally privileged subjectivity which both grounds and is grounded by such reality. In short, though Branigan does an excellent job detailing the individuating and grounding aspects of *8 1/2*, he is unable to account for its post-individuating aspects.

In terms of jettisoning the individual, Fellini's next film, *Juliet of the Spirits*, is both an advance and a retreat. On the one hand, Juliet is fragmented into far more pieces than Guido. As the film's title suggests, she is a product of the many (all her spirits) rather than the one. Her subjectivity is, in short, fundamentally decentered. However, as in *The Nights of Cabiria*, the thrust of the film is to integrate the many into the one. (This is reflected in Fellini's claim that Juliet is forced "to find herself, to seek her free identity as an individual. And this gives her the insight to realize that all the fears —the phantoms that lived around her—were monsters of her own creation, bred of misshapen education and misread religion"—Fellini, *Playboy* 62).

It is a relatively simple task to deconstruct this attempted reintegration. First of all, Juliet's "oneness" could never exist without her multiplicity—a fact suggested even at film's end when her spirits assert their ever presence.[10] Second, she has become one or "self-identical" through a series of negations —rejecting (among other things) Bhisma, Suzy, Jose, the Godson, the image of her mother, and in fact her tormenting spirits. Based on a series of denials, her identity of self-presence is thus constructed out of absences, non-identities. Third, Juliet exists only because she is seen, and in effect made visible, by her principal "spirits": the camera eye, and, by extension, us-the-audience. (We and the camera waft in through the trees, spirit-like, at the beginning of the film, and she looks us directly in the eye, acknowledging our presence as "spirits," at the end.) Finally, the Juliet who walks off into the forest at the end is "contaminated" by cultural significations. She is, among other things, a princess in a fairy tale and a virgin/child. Her "individuality" is hardly indivisible. It is multiply intersected by socially produced and determined meanings.

However, while the subject can be deconstructed, we must do the work—in effect against the will of the film. For that reason, *Juliet of the Spirits* functions more as an anomaly at this point in Fellini's career—and as a throw-back to earlier films.

Fellini's next film, "Toby Dammit" (1968)[11] takes an issue, death, that was principally subtextual and metaphoric in *8 1/2* and makes it the (missing) center of its story. (Fellini had suffered a serious illness prior to the making of the film and had also been involved in an unsuccessful project—"The Voyage of G. Mastorna"—which focused on death.) In fact "Toby Dammit" is a film par excellence of the "dead subject" and dead author. Toby's past-tense voice-over at the beginning, plus his "death" at the end, make clear that he speaks from beyond the grave. That makes his signature at the beginning, written against the sky, the signature of a ghost or missing person. Identity becomes merely the citing/site-ing/sighting of its absence.[12]

More concretely, the film makes clear that Toby must renounce identity and subjectivity, since both are entirely constituted by society. As an actor (the film's most pervasive metaphor), Toby is "identified" only in roles created by other people—

and only by speaking other people's words.

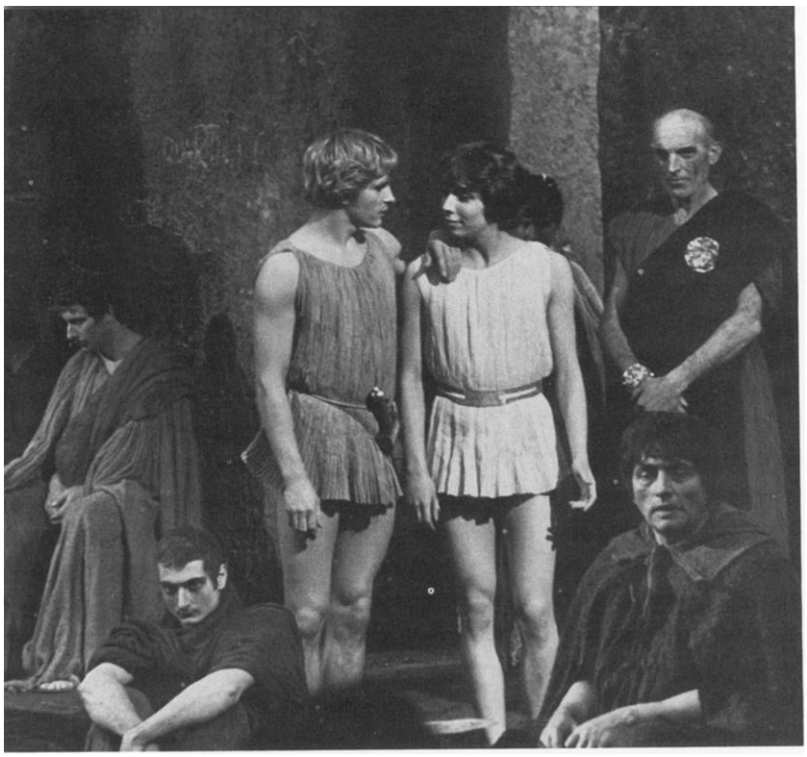
Toby's existence solely as a culturally inscribed actor is implicit in the fact that he originates in fiction—a short story by Edgar Allan Poe ("Never Bet the Devil Your Head"). It is reinforced by his resemblance—sartorial and facial—to Poe himself. (Fellini deliberately had Terence Stamp made up to look like Poe.) It is exemplified in his impersonation of Macbeth—not only reciting Macbeth's lines but losing his head. It is present even in the fact that his name is not personal but metaphoric, naming not an individual but a set of culturally coded meanings. Finally, it pervades Toby's very psychology: socially constructed oppositions (dark vs. light, salvation vs. damnation, head vs. body, private vs. professional) in which the most "personal" of Toby's weapons—the Devil—is, though tailored to Toby's bizarre tastes, a consummate cultural cliche.

Toby's paradoxical fate—to be by not being—informs his end and that of the film. Driving his Ferrari, Toby makes an impossible leap across an abyss—but we hear and see no crash. There is no corpse. Instead, there are metonymic substitutes for his death: a bloody rope (quite dissociated from the scene of the supposed accident), a waxen replica of his head. Toby, in short, dies and does *not* die, a fact underscored by his beyond-the-grave narration. Indeed Toby remains, but now only as the film that bears his name. He is gone as subject and as author. With this final displacement, identity is again undermined as anything individual, indivisible, and unique. It is dispersed throughout a text that is consummately reproducible—via new prints, new screenings, re-viewings, etc. Moreover, as a text within a photographic medium, it is properly reproducible only through its negative. Medium, character, and story all come together to assert identity and selfhood only under erasure.

The erasure of character/actor/subject recurs in *Fellini-Satyricon* (1969), partly as a result of Fellini's continued emphasis on gaps and absences: "I reread Petronius and was fascinated by an element I had not noticed before: the missing parts; that is, the blanks between one episode and the next. . . . that business of fragments really fascinated me" (Grazzini 171-72).[13] The effacement of the subject recurs also as the result of Fellini's repudiation of character and acting in *Fellini: A Director's Notebook* (1968), a short film made between "Toby Dammit" and *Fellini-Satyricon*. The motivating force of *Director's Notebook* is the evasiveness, the nonmaterialization, of a hero or main character. The film begins with Fellini discussing his abandonment of a project, "The Voyage of G. Mastorna," because Mastorna "has not arrived yet."[14] This in turn leads to an examination of the inadequacy of Marcello Mastroianni, and to some extent Giulietta Masina, as stimuli to Fellini, because of their history as well-defined actor/characters within Fellini's films (see Foreman, "Poor Player"; Prats and Pieters). Acting itself is clearly critiqued in the appearance of Caterina Baratto and her dreadful attempts to portray a bloodthirsty Roman matron. The problem of character/acting then leads Fellini to a new strategy, a new kind of film-making, important not only for *Director's Notebook* but for all his films through *Amarcord*: he seeks out unprofessional actors with intriguing and appropriate faces in place of the familiar personae and skills of trained actors. He chooses, in short, a cinema of image or surface over one of character and depth. This leads directly to *Fellini-Satyricon*, not only with its cast of unknowns, but with its use of the fresco as its principal visual "unit."

(Fellini's search for unique and fresh faces is, of course, at odds with the self-reflexive use and re-use of Mastroianni, Masina, Ekberg, and himself in his most recent films. The former suggests a lingering romantic/modernist quest for novelty and originality as the wellsprings of inspiration—hence a lingering faith in the integrity of artistic creation. The latter reflects a postmodernist acknowledgement of repetition, reproduction, citation—the "always already"—as the inescapable condition of de/creation. Thus Fellini's rejection of actor/character/predefined subject contributes to the erasure of unified subjectivity while at the same time remaining invested in it.)

Fellini's new conception of casting and (de)characterization is immediately reflected in *Satyricon*'s Encolpio. In my experience, most people who have seen *Fellini-Satyricon* for the first time have remained unaware that the film has a protagonist of any sort. Encolpio is hardly a central character in the way that Guido, Juliet, and Toby were. Like the cracked frescoes and broken statues that litter *Satyricon*'s landscape, Encolpio is a fragment, relating to other events and characters, as well as the



Fellini Satyricon: Encolpio is in short dark tunic.

audience, only at the jagged edge of (dis)connection. The narrative itself is a series of fragments (dis)jointed at *their* rough edges—narrative, in short, in absentia: "the potsherds, crumbs, and dust of a vanished world" (Fellini, *Satyricon* 46). Encolpio's capacity to narrate (and even articulate) comes and goes, reflecting the fracturing of individual intelligence. He even disappears at times, remaining absent from crucial events such as the suicide of the patricians.

Encolpio, like Toby, is a fictional reproduction (originating in Petronius as Toby originated in Poe). In reproducing him, Fellini jettisons his conventional underpinnings of character: depth or "growth" psychology, Christian symbolism, humanist ethics and values, and the teleology of motive and goal. Far more than Toby, Encolpio is pure fictional cipher, adrift in a flow of arbitrary narrative which itself is adrift in the arbitrary flow of historical, political, and social change.

At film's end, though Encolpio seems momentarily to emerge as a unifying voice, he is confirmed and preserved in a state of fragmentation. He begins to narrate his itinerary upon setting sail, only to have his words broken off in mid-sentence. His image turns into a cracked fresco which itself is separated by cracks from other figures on the same fresco. Then, as the camera draws back, the fresco is revealed to be only one fragment among several. The solid wall which opened the film has been fissured and, with it, unity and wholeness on every level—from the narrative to the historical to the individual.

The Clowns (1970) seems initially to reinstate character and subjectivity with a vengeance by situating Fellini himself as first-person narrator and protagonist. Yet, like *8 1/2* and "Toby Dammit" (and unlike *Director's Notebook*, to which it is partially indebted) *The Clowns* ends up being far more about the death of the author/subject than about his(her) predominance. In killing Fellini off as auteur, *The Clowns* radically repositions Fellini in relation to his work—putting him at least in quotation marks and at most under erasure.

The Clowns reinstitutes a kind of autobiographical problematic that marks much of Fellini's earlier work. Though films such as *I Vitelloni*, *La Dolce Vita*, *8 1/2*, and *Amarcord* are superficially autobiographical, they open broad gaps between Fellini and his past. *I Vitelloni* is set in a town reminiscent of Fellini's own Rimini and features one character, Moraldo, who gets out at the end. However, the differences between the world of the film and Fellini's past are far greater than the similarities. The *vitelloni* are products of a specific economic and cultural moment (postwar provincial Italy of the 1950s) which has little in common with Fellini's youth. More important, Moraldo, as his name suggests, represents the morality or mores of the provinces—something with which Fellini himself would hardly identify.[15] And his alienated escape at the end has little in common with Fellini's move from the provinces to Rome. (See Alpert 30ff.) Marcello of *La Dolce Vita* is, like Fellini, a provincial who made it to the city—hence Moraldo's presumed fictional heir. He is, however, a jaded yellow journalist who is even further distanced from Fellini than was Moraldo. He mirrors the latter both in paralyzed detachment and ultimate disillusionment, and his story represents an exhaustive study in character fragmentation. In short, he proves highly unsuitable for any kind of Fellinian working through of genuinely autobiographical issues.[16]

8 1/2 and *Amarcord* seem initially to be much more promising in terms of autobiography, the former because of its protagonist, the latter because of its historical setting. However, the effacement of the Fellini surrogate in the first and the pointed absence of one in the second eliminate the grounding upon which genuine autobiography depends.

Such grounding is not lacking in two strongly autobiographical Fellini scripts that have recently been published: "Moraldo in the City" and "Journey with Anita" (Stubbs; Alpert 36–40, 118–21). However, the fact that Fellini never realized these projects seems to confirm an unwillingness or incapacity on his part to use autobiography in anything other than distanciating and deconstructive ways. This conjoining of autobiography and (self)-deconstruction is precisely the kind of autobiographical problematic that informs *The Clowns*.

The opening segment introduces character and subjectivity as far more the product than the producer of experience. Fellini as a child enters a circus arena and is, in effect, refashioned—turned into a clown. (The film's title clearly includes Fellini, along with everyone else in the movie.) More specifically, Fellini-the-child's initial fear of clowns, especially the rowdy "Augustes," turns him into a "White Clown" (the authoritarian figure in the White Clown-Auguste relationship), who seeks to contemplate, understand, hence control his circus experience (Burke, "*Clowns*"). It is Fellini-the-White Clown who, as an adult, seeks to document the clown.

The subject is not only constructed (rather than pristine, autonomous) in *The Clowns*, it is culturally coded—since what refashions the young Fellini is an art form with a long tradition and a well-defined logic or ideational apparatus (i.e., the White Clown-Auguste dialectic). This emphasis on the precoded confirms a shift in Fellini's films from "original" stories to the reproduction of other stories, other art (Poe/Shakespeare in "Toby Dammit," Petronius in *Fellini-Satyricon*, now the art of the clown). Fellini's increasing acknowledgement of *re*production (vs. creation) becomes, in turn, the basis (as I have already suggested) for his deconstruction of subjectivity and authority in his most recent work.

The problem of author/subject in *The Clowns* is defined principally in terms of Fellini's attempts to make a documentary—i.e., to appropriate (as unified and autonomous subject) the clowns (as object and "other"). However, Fellini is no more successful in imposing his directorial will than was Guido. The documentary fails, and a different kind of filmic process takes its place. Even moreso than with Guido, creative experience happens to and around Fellini rather than originating within him. And just as Fellini-the-child was constructed by the clown/circus discourse (rather than vice versa), Fellini the adult becomes constructed within fictional/narrative discourse rather than standing outside it (Burke, "*Clowns*"; Prats).

Like *8 1/2*, *The Clowns* concludes with a series of authorial deaths and effacements. First of all, Fellini must abandon his role as documentary filmmaker—his principal role in the film. Then, as he directs a different kind of film (an extravagant "resurrection" of the clown Fischietto), he gets a bucket over his head. Moreover, the resurrection attempt is mechanical and labored—and is followed by a hollow sense of anticlimax. Most important, Fellini, like Guido, ultimately disappears. In the final moments, an old clown (Fumigalli) assumes Fellini's narrative authority, resurrects the clown much more successfully, and brings *The Clowns* to a close.

Storytelling in *The Clowns* thus ends up occurring through erasure and substitution, making narrative fortuitous and fragmentary. At the same time, the grand controlling author is eliminated—not just in the surrogate guise of a Guido—but in the person of Fellini, the "grand romantic artist," himself.

Though *The Clowns* ultimately does in the author-as-subject, Fellini's presence as director is dominant until the very last moments. Also, through voiceover, Fellini-as-adult is made clearly continuous with Fellini-as-child in terms not only of identity but motivation. (Fellini-the-adult's desire to document clowns is clearly rooted in Fellini-the-child's experiences.) In this sense, characterization in *The Clowns* is more stable than in "Toby Dammit" or *Satyricon*. *Roma*, on the other hand, consistently undermines continuity and stability. In its original conception, *Roma* had virtually no voiceover: the screenplay includes only one brief instance of Fellini addressing the viewer (Fellini, Roma 272), and a theatrical print I saw in Rome (spring 1983) was true to the screenplay. (Some narration appears to have been added to prints shown on Italian television circa 1983.) Furthermore, neither the screenplay nor the Italian-language versions I have seen make any positive identification as Fellini of either the child at the beginning or the young adult in Rome of the 1930s. No narrative voice or charac-

ter ever designates the child or the young adult as Fellini. (The screenplay is insistent on referring to the young adult only as "il ragazzo"—the boy or young man—even when it would be much simpler for purposes of both simple reference and clarity to refer to him as young Fellini.)

Even in the English-language version, which contains voice-over material requested by United Artists,[17] *Roma* cannot help but undermine the consistency of Fellini's presence. The narrative voice is not Fellini's. There is still no designation of the child or young adult as Fellini. (The closest we get is the narrator's statement, following the young adult's first day in Rome: "Thirty years or more have passed since that fabulous evening"—which still keeps the connection oblique.) Both child and young adult are missing from many scenes which, in a conventional flashback-narrative, would have been justified narratively only by their presence or point of view. (*Roma* again differs sharply from *The Clowns*.) And the young adult is played by a Spanish-American actor (Peter Gonzalez) whose origins, native tongue, look, and American mannerisms enhance the distance between Fellini as an adult and any possible earlier manifestation. (Incidentally, the circumstances of this figure's arrival in Rome are markedly different from Fellini's own —Alpert, 29ff.)

In short, though we may be inclined to assume a link between contemporary and younger Fellinis, the film itself refuses to forge one. Fellini refuses to materialize as a coherent and continuous persona, and as a result, "he" is at best an inference, scattered among a number of subject positions.

In addition, even the Fellini of the 1970s is barely in evidence. There is no establishing scene to define his documentary motives and purpose, as there was in *The Clowns*. After Fellini is shown directing the film crew's entry into Rome (a sequence which, tellingly, ends in chaos), he is absent for most of the film's remaining sequences. Even when he reappears at the Festa di Noantri, he is barely noticeable among the crowds, and Gore Vidal's interview is initiated not by Fellini but by one of his crew. The only time he becomes insistent in this final scene (with Anna Magnani), he is dismissed ("Go to sleep. . . . I don't trust you. . . . Good night.")

As in *The Clowns*, documentary film-making, as a centering, author-ized, project fails; even the documentary camera is stolen. And, again, Fellini is effaced at the end. Once Magnani dismisses him, a gang of motorcyclists rides into the frame, Fellini vanishes, and the cyclists bring the film to a close.

Even more than in *The Clowns*, Fellini exists as someone constructed entirely within cultural coding. For one thing, there is no Fellini figure who initially stands outside the "arena" of cultural conditioning (the child in *The Clowns* watched the erection of the circus tent from his window the night before he entered it). From the outset, Fellini is entirely positioned within and produced by the multiple discourses that are "Roma." This is true even if we infer a link between present-day Fellini and the child of the opening sequences, who first appears in uniform, amidst a crowd of students, getting a history lecture on Caesar. It is even truer if we refuse to infer this link—and see Fellini produced well into the narrative by discourse itself.

Unlike "the clowns," "Roma" does not constitute a highly specific personal experience such as Fellini's childhood encounter with the circus. Rome encompasses history, culture, ethnicity, religion, art, movies, government, geography, and so on ad infinitum. Consequently, individuality and subjectivity are situated at the intersection of an enormous aggregate of discourses.

Equally important, Rome is anything but a centering phenomenon, capable of fixing identity. It is ever-shifting, unencompassable, indefinable. It comes to represent not a place or even site of discourses, but always what is *not there*. (This is true from the opening image of the rock, signifying "elsewhere," through the closing images of the cyclists, whose exodus again makes Rome "elsewhere.") Ultimately Rome is the force of change or difference, making history or meaning possible but also riddling it with instability. It is the surge of the present in the subway sequence that obliterates the underground frescoes—but at the same time, creates a tabula rasa on which anything can be painted. Rome is also the inexplicable materialization of the cyclists: impersonal, empowered, irresistible—configuring and dispersing, centering and decentering—origin and destination unknown. Ultimately Rome "names" that which is unnameable, all that escapes identification, hence identity.[18]

Roma's deconstruction of the subject/author culminates a process initiated in *8 1/2*. It also points to the films that will follow (*Amarcord* to

Intervista). It takes up a notion implied in "Toby Dammit" and *Fellini-Satyricon*—the self as mere *re*production—and paradoxically "personalizes" it by applying it to Fellini himself. (By applying it to himself rather than merely fictional figures, Fellini of course makes the issue all the more compelling.) Whereas *The Clowns* initially offers the possibility of a narrative "I" in charge of (re)creation and discourse, *Roma*—by completely absenting that "I"—turns Fellini into pure product. Not only is he reproduced by the multiple discourses that are "Roma," he is entirely a product of cinema. He is always and only the discourse(s) of his film. Unable to stand outside and create the text, he, like Toby, is dispersed through and by it. In an age and medium of mechanical reproduction, Fellini, the "original," ends up generated by the copy.

The dismantling of the subject, and Fellini himself as subject, does not automatically absolve Fellini's work from the charges of self-indulgence so often levied against it. To a large extent, his films must center the subject in order to decenter it. Moreover, their self-reflexivity can be seen as an attempt at recuperation of selfhood in the face of its acknowledged demise. Nonetheless, the issue of subjectivity in his work is far more complex than has generally been recognized. Focusing much less on Fellini himself than his severest critics would claim, Fellini's films not only reflect but help constitute the vibrant contemporary theorization of the subject under erasure.

Notes

1. I am relying on recollection, the index, and a recent check of *Movies and Methods* I and II. *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* lacks an index, so I am relying here on recollection plus a check.
2. For a more detailed analysis of this "narrative of individuation," see Burke, *Federico Fellini*, especially chapters eight and ten.
   I employ qualifying terms such as "apparently" and "seems" in my remarks about *The Nights of Cabiria* because of the convincing poststructuralist critique of such notions as individuation, enlightenment, and self-integration (a critique which, I might add, is missing from my own study of Fellini cited in this note). It is not my goal in this essay to undertake such a critique with regard to *The Nights of Cabiria*, especially since my discussion of Fellini's later films implicitly does this job.
3. The quotations about individuality are from an interview which focused equally on *8 1/2* and *Juliet of the Spirits*. Perhaps Fellini's most frequently quoted statement on the subject was uttered in 1962, the year Fellini was making *8 1/2*: ". . . what I care about most is the freedom of man, the liberation of the individual man from the network of moral and social convention in which he believes, or rather in which he thinks he believes, and which encloses him and limits him. . . ." (Fellini, *Fellini* 157) It is interesting to note the utter lack of emphasis on individuality in Fellini's 1980s book-length interview (Grazzini).
4. Consistent with his problematizing of the subject in *Amarcord*, Fellini has both maintained that "amarcord" means "I remember' and, on other occasions, denied it.
5. Fred Astaire was born Frederick Austerlitz; Ginger Rogers, Virginia Catherine McMath.
6. Appropriately, there is no author implied in the film's title: *Intervista* is a noun, not a verb with a subject.
7. For a more extensive discussion of the consolidation and dissolution of Guido's identity in *8 1/2*, see Burke, "Modes."
   Interestingly, as we examine Fellini's comments about preparing for this film, we find an immediate problem with the identity of the main character: "I had not yet decided what type of man we would try to portray, what his profession would be: a lawyer? an engineer? a journalist? . . . One day I decided to put my dream hero in a spa . . . . But then the plot began to unravel altogether. It didn't have a central core from which to develop, nor a beginning, nor could I imagine how it might end. Every morning Pinelli asked me what our hero's profession was. I still didn't know. . . . I . . . couldn't manage to find my film again. . . . I admitted that maybe it had never existed." (Grazzini 160, 161) We might say, then, that Fellini's attempts to make *8 1/2* mark the search for a *missing* identity.
8. Christian Metz has, of course, analyzed the mirroring aspects of *8 1/2* in great detail in his well known essay "Mirror Construction in Fellini's *8 1/2*."
9. I have somewhat rearranged the order of Branigan's statements to provide a concise summary of his logic.
10. In English-language prints, Juliet tells her spirits "I don't need you any more"—an act of dismissal that is *not* part of the original film.
11. For those unfamiliar with this short Fellini work, "Toby Dammit" was part of a film anthology entitled *Spirits of the Dead* (*Tre passi nel delirio* in Italian), released in 1969. All the films were based on short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. The other directors involved were Roger Vadim ("Metzengerstein") and Louis Malle ("William Wilson"). Though not as well known as other Fellini films from this period, "Toby Dammit" is crucial in highlighting shifts in Fellini's signifying practice.
12. For a penetrating analysis of "Toby Dammit"—and one quite consistent with the argument in my essay—see Foreman, "Poor Player."
13. Fellini also talks of making the fragments whole through dream, but as I will try to suggest, the effect of *Fellini Satyricon* is to privilege the fragment, not the whole.
14. Mastorna's role as inspiration for Fellini throughout the late sixties and seventies is further testimony to the importance of the "missing subject" in Fellini's work. ("I am certain that without *Mastorna* I would not have imag-

ined *Satyricon* . . . nor *Casanova* nor the *City of Women* . . . . Even *And the Ship Sails On* and *The Orchestra Rehearsal* owe a small debt to *Mastorna*"—Grazzini 169).

15. See Burke, *Federico Fellini*, pp. 21-28 for a more detailed analysis of *I Vitelloni* and Moraldo.
16. *La Dolce Vita* initially seems interesting in terms of the dismantling of the subject that occurs in later Fellini films. However, as the final shots of the film make clear, that dismantling takes place in light of a strong romantic yearning for purity and wholeness. Such yearning is strongly diminished even by the making of *8 1/2*.
17. So Fellini informed me in a conversation in Rome in June of 1983.
18. For a fine analysis of *Roma* which makes some of the points made here, see Foreman, "Cinematic City."
19. For much of the factual information that follows, I am indebted to Alpert—less for providing it (nearly all of it pre-exists his biography of Fellini) but for verifying its accuracy, since so much of it initially appeared in interviews.
20. It is also interesting to note that, as the subject begins to dissolve in the film text, it is momentarily recuperated by the credits. The phrase "conceived and directed by Federico Fellini" appears for the first time in the titles to *8 1/2*. The only other time it appears is in *Juliet of the Spirits*, accentuating yet again the ambivalence toward the subject at this stage of Fellini's work.

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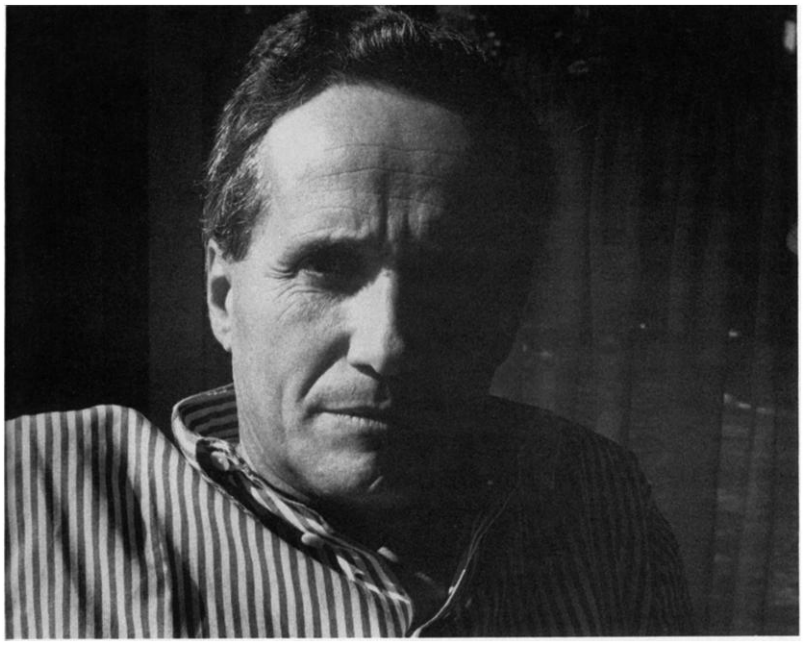


Peter Brunette

A Conversation with Marco Bellocchio

It is difficult to believe that Marco Bellocchio, *enfant terrible* of Italian cinema, will turn 50 this year. The original impact of his *Fists in the Pocket* and *China Is Near* remains so fresh in the memory, and the films still so powerful on subsequent viewings, that it is easy to forget that they were made almost a quarter century ago. Bellocchio has never been the kind of "comfortable" art-film director, like a Truffaut or a Fellini, say, once so popular with a certain American film-going public, and he has been only intermittently in evidence in the years since his early triumphs. Nor, apparently, is his popularity about to improve. In recent years, in fact, his films, still as confrontational as ever, have become increasingly elliptical in narrative structure, and perhaps even more obsessively personal.

Bellocchio followed up his early successes with another brilliant, challenging film, *In the Name of the Father* (1971), an examination of the typical Bellocchian themes of institutional repression and sexual power in the context of a boy's school. Throughout the 1970s, he was occupied with films that have rarely been seen here. Several of these films were made with political collectives—films such as *Paola* (1969), *Sbatti il mostro in prima pagine* (1972; roughly, "Throw the Monster on Page One") and *Matti da slegare* (1974; "Crazy People to Set Free"). The last, originally shot in 16mm, argues for the de-institutionalization of the insane. Bellocchio has said that, despite the parody of the Maoist group in *China Is Near*, he made these films with avowedly Marxist-Leninist political groups because in the wake of '68 he was looking for a revolutionary perspective that was more scientific and less frivolous than that of the student groups he had been a part of. In any case, he has always insisted that any eventual revolution must be accomplished on two levels at once, the personal as well as the political, and it is the personal, clearly, that has come to dominate his work.

The more commercial but hardly mainstream *Marcia trionfale* (1976) followed these more overtly political films. A disturbing Oedipal drama of infidelity and murder set this time in an army barracks, it explores yet another site of institutional repression. Turning next to Chekhov, Bellocchio filmed *The Seagull* (1977) for Channel One of the RAI, the government television network. He has said that he continues to involve himself intimately with the theater, both in stage productions as well as adaptations, so that he will never be taken as a one-film-per-year kind of director with a certain identifiable personal style that makes him predictable and easy to categorize.

Throughout the eighties, Bellocchio's films have had somewhat more success with an American audience, but that audience has sometimes seemed largely confined to the island of Manhattan, and even there critics have been harsh. He continues to worry the problem of the bourgeois intellectual—unlike his nearly exact contemporary, Bernardo Bertolucci, who seems to have stopped worrying about anything—and the obsessive themes remain. Sexuality, madness, and repressive power—and their multiple permutations, which

vary greatly from film to film—still predominate, but these more recent films have unfortunately lacked the humor that, despite all their gravity and violence, always characterized his early films. *Leap into the Void* (1979), with Michel Piccoli and Anouk Aimée, is a powerful study of sexual conflict and the way the "loving" repression inherent within families often exacerbates madness. Unfortunately, its unconventional manner of signaling approaching flashbacks and other technical novelties baffled American critics accustomed to having these sort of things clearly spelled out. (It lasted a mere three days in Washington, DC before being chased out by hostile reviews). *Leap* was followed by *The Eyes, the Mouth* (1982), a demanding reprise, along more purely emotional lines, perhaps, of the earlier *Fists in the Pocket*; it starred the same actor, Lou Castel, who, at one point in *The Eyes*, takes a woman to see the earlier film. This was followed by an uneven screen adaptation of Pirandello's *Henry IV*, with Marcello Mastroianni, that Bellocchio himself has admitted was not very successful. Most recently, he has made a commercially successful modern-day adaptation of Radiguet's notorious novel *Devil in the Flesh* (1986), starring Maruschka Detmers, whose scene of fellatio unfortunately distracted critics from a consideration of Bellocchio's deeper if hardly new themes of madness, sex, and power.

His latest film, *La Visione del sabba* (1988), is misleadingly entitled *Sabbath* in English, since in Italian *sabba* is a precise reference to a *witches'* sabbath. In a complex mixing of medieval, irrational past and scientific, rational present, the film recounts a young male psychiatrist's risky emotional encounter with a young female psychotic who is convinced that she is a witch from an earlier time. Involving himself intimately in his patient's fantasies, he defies the rules of his profession (explicitly challenging it as yet one more repressive institution), as he gradually comes to realize that a strictly rational approach to madness is, by definition, doomed to failure. At the height of his "vision" of the forbidden, he becomes caught up in the frenzy of a magnificently choreographed (if perhaps overly long) witches' dance inside a burning circle. Dream and reality, past and present, are collapsed in exciting but also inordinately challenging ways, and the demands the film makes upon a audience do not bode well for a commercial release in this country. In any case, the film seems to mark a turning point for Bellocchio in its unusual reliance on the nonverbal expressiveness of dance and music, and especially on the purely visual—abstract line, form, and color—to make its point.

Our conversation took place (in Italian) in August, 1988, at the Montreal World Film Festival, where Bellocchio's new film was in competition. The director was friendly and forthcoming, apparently happy to answer even the most inane question, yet also stubbornly insistent upon his own vision of things. His latest film inevitably raises troubling questions regarding his portrayal of the (often naked) witch, played by Beatrice Dalle, whom he obviously wants to endow with certain special "female characteristics" such as an affinity for the irrational and an ability to experience emotion more intensely than men. It's clear that she also represents for Bellocchio an entrancing, intuitive mystery that remains forever unfathomable to men's rationality. Such a perspective is hardly new, of course, and like most European directors and screenwriters I have spoken with—both male and female—he does not want women to lose such "natural" differences from men, and is uncomfortable going beyond such bedrock binary oppositions. Hence, a general reluctance to pursue this subject to its logical conclusion is reflected in our conversation. It is also clear, however, that for many years Bellocchio's obsessive goal has been to move beyond the constraints of rationality and its repressive social effects, and that he recognizes that each so-called female characteristic is, to the extent it is permitted expression, part of the makeup of every man as well.

What does the title of your new film represent?

From the moment the psychiatrist loses his professionalism, his professional coldness, his fantasies open up and he begins to see things he never saw before. He has the "Vision of the Sabbath." It's about someone who was a very good psychiatrist, in a normal situation with a family, with kids, and yet, for complicated reasons, he risks losing himself.

Is the film based on historical fact?

In regard to the past as it is shown in the film, it has no relationship with specific historical facts. I

wasn't trying to treat witchcraft itself. The witches' sabbath has very specific rules and ceremonies that I didn't really respect. The historical aspect is simply sketched in. It's really the force of fantasy on her part, and then as the fantasy passes over to him. The moment he enters deeply into a relationship with her, his fantasy becomes richer. But only in regard to his unconscious. For example, somebody told me that they saw the theory of reincarnation in the film, but that's not at all what I was trying to do—though of course everyone can see it however they want. There is a kind of metaphysical side to it, of course.

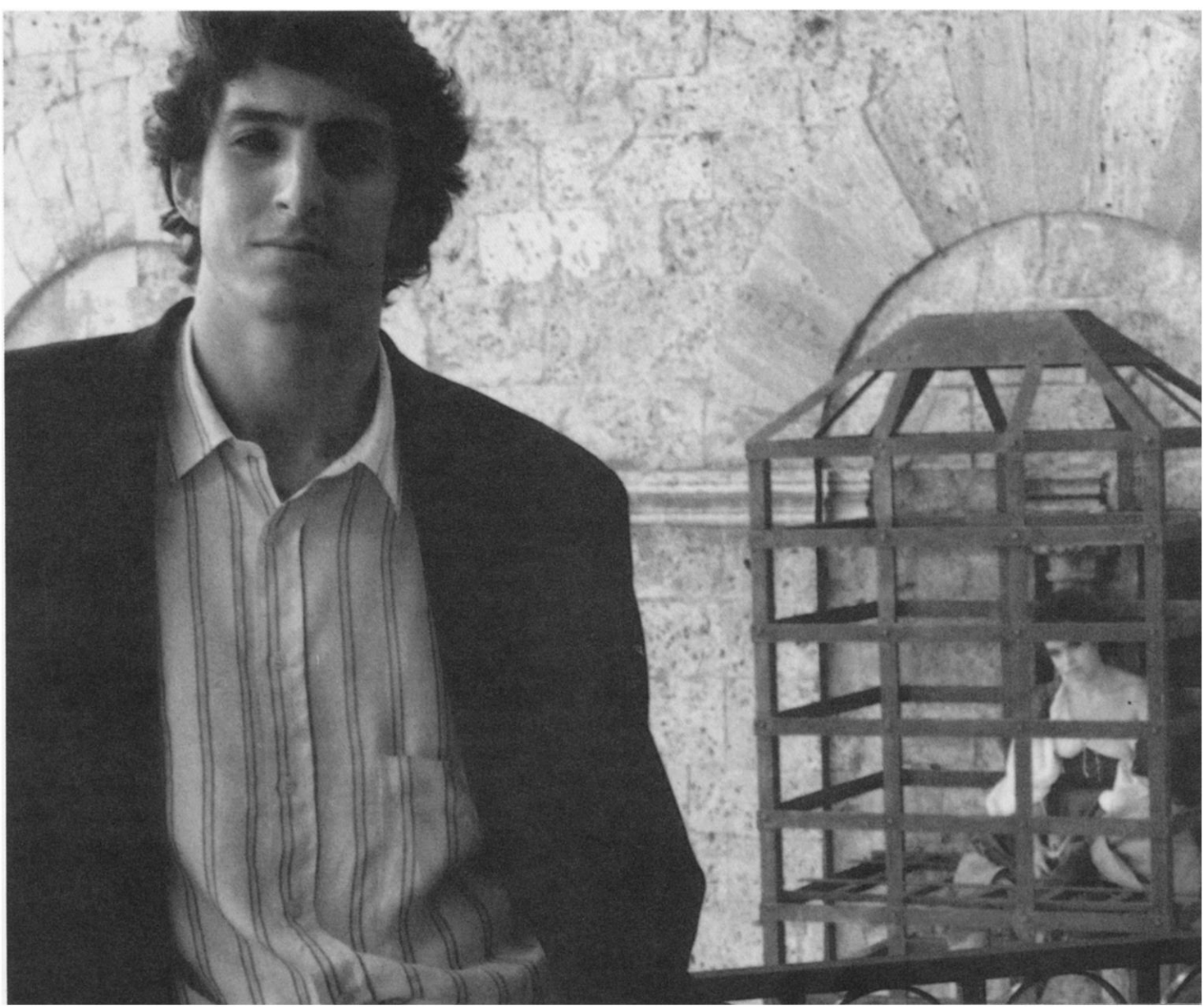
What attracted you to the subject?

I was very interested in trying to understand the "sorceress" side of the woman—in relation to man, naturally—and by extension, perhaps, of all women. I don't mean this in the bad sense, of course, otherwise the feminists would kill me! I mean the dimension of seduction, women's relation to men, the mystery that always surrounds women. This is something very dangerous, but it is a side that women must absolutely not lose. I am fascinated by the irrational in women, and that's what the film is about.

What might a feminist say about this "sorceress" side of women?

I think it's very important for women to defend their social victories. It's important that they have their own social autonomy and the social freedom to not become wives or mothers; women must become independent. But along with this, women must not lose the characteristics that belong only to them, not to men. They mustn't lose the "witch-

Sabbath: The force of fantasy.



like'' dimension, something that different women have in different degrees. This must not be lost.

But feminists might object that, once again, everything, even the definition of a woman, is centered on the needs of the man.

Clearly, I'm speaking from a male point of view. But we must respect a certain natural *difference*; after all, men are different, they have penises, and so on. Even their natures are different. I'm not in any way talking about physical superiority, or about violence; actually, it's sometimes more violent not to do something than to do it.

Yet, the psychiatrist's wife is also just one more woman shown pining after her wayward husband, and all that.

Well, I didn't want to caricature the wife in any way. In fact, she's extremely beautiful, but she uses an entire series of different weapons that men sometimes use too. When a relationship is in crisis, there's always a great fear of breaking it off, so she uses all these little schemes and threats, blackmail, and so on; what is used depends on the social status of the couple. But in fact there is something recurring in this, something that keeps repeating itself. It's also true that the wife doesn't have much of a story, because the film is focused on the other two characters. In a certain way, she's predictable, but I don't think it's because she's being represented as ridiculous or as a caricature. She is charming, and can even be considered as more beautiful than the witch, but she lacks something that the witch has, and that's why he falls in love with the witch.

Professional psychiatric circles seem to think that a psychiatrist must never *have sexual relations with a patient, yet in your film such relations are presented favorably.*

Well, from a professional point of view, this is correct in some ways. A sexual relationship within therapy can be extremely negative and destructive. But at the same time, in order for a patient to improve, it's very important that the analyst must not be on the defensive. Also, this relationship is presented symbolically in the film, in the sense that a psychosis can only be confronted through a complete openness. Otherwise, the therapy fails. The patient's psychosis can't be confronted defensively or with complete professional coldness and technique. Some of the psychiatrists in the film obviously don't have the enormous internal sense of security that it takes to deal with the girl's violence.

Some of your recent films have been attacked by critics because they are so hard to follow. In this film as well, the relation between the past and present is never all that clear.

That relation is one of the principal themes of the film. I know it may be rather difficult for the public to follow, but I didn't want to do the kind of classic flashback to present the past, or to spell out the dreams that occur at various points during the film. I wanted to bring the past *into* the present, in an absolutely free fashion. Some of the appearances of the witch have no believability, no verisimilitude about them at all. She's in prison, then she shows up at the lake, and so on. In a certain sense, I was trying to destroy, or at least to avoid, a very classical novelistic structure, and instead to follow certain paths that lead to the unconscious rather than to the conscious mind. One of the major themes of the film is the struggle between the rational, that which controls and is male, and the irrational, that which is completely uncontrollable or indefinable, that which cannot be "closed."

Why did you chose Beatrice Dalle for the lead?

In a film, as you know, it's always necessary to mix artistic choices with economic necessities. You have to be able to do this to be a director, otherwise you had better look for another line of work. It was a coproduction with France, so we had to have a mix of French and Italian actors. Since I had seen Beatrice in Beneix's *Betty Blue*, I knew her work and admired it a great deal. It's very difficult for an actress to play a schizophrenic subtly, to avoid playing madness in the American style, you know, completely crazy. So, she read the script, liked it, and for once, the necessities of production coincided nicely with artistic choice.

How much of this film is autobiographical?

There are two sides to the autobiography question. In other words, in this film there aren't any episodes that have something directly to do with my autobiography. I don't see myself in the psychiatrist. In the earlier films, of course, there was a direct link between my work and my own personal biography. But more recently, there is a connection from the point of view of a psychoanalytic investigation, in a sense, that is closely tied up with my

own life, both past and present, and so one can speak of an autobiographical element, perhaps, that is very indirect.

Yes, your ongoing interest in madness and psychoanalysis is evident in this film as well.

What interests me is people in rebellion, against social constraints or whatever. I want to show characters in revolt against a situation that is suffocating them, and this possibility of change through rebellion is what interests me. I'm simply unable to show characters in fixed situations. Sometimes the rebellion fails, but it has to take place so that the character can change. Madness is also a form of rebellion, a cry of freedom. The study of madness is one of the principal themes in my work, going all the way back to *Fists in the Pocket*. One of the reasons this subject keeps returning is that there's never any definitive cure in psychoanalysis, it's always a kind of search, and I'm involved in a group that does this together. It's something general and universal that is very closely tied up with my own work. In my own work, I've always been interested—and it's something that's stronger than I am—in portraying a situation which contrasts strongly with normality, to go against a certain social normality, and thus the subject of madness keeps returning.

There is always the triangle in your films: love and sexuality, madness, and power or the law. In Sabbath *the law seems to have disappeared.*

This was a very difficult film to make, both from the point of view of form, of style, and from the point of view of the acting, the production, the shooting itself. What resulted was a film that was written one way, but was made in another. There was an aspect of the film that had to do, let's say, with social protest—the psychiatric aspect, for example, in which the young psychiatrist rebels against his teacher, was originally richer and more extended, but when we put the film together, we had to eliminate a lot of this. But the protest against a certain institutional mentality of psychiatry is still very much there. So, the social critique, the rebelliousness that you're referring to, I think, is also represented in this film. Of course, in the final version of the film the two things that come out most strongly are the sexual relationship and the imagination, the fantasy, risk, creativity. But this social element always has to be there as well—in different ways in different films, depending on the subject—because otherwise they become too intimate, too internalized. There's an external behavior that has a lot to do with our internal behavior, our social choices, our resistances, which conditions us and has enormous influence on our sexual behavior, for example. There's a direct relationship between them. In this film, it's true that this is not totally clear, but when he refuses to listen to his professor and instead makes love with the girl, this critique was what I had in mind.

I've always seen a connection between you and Pasolini in this regard: sexuality as perhaps the last possibility of rebellion against the forces of normality.

Yes, he also developed an antibourgeois polemic, one that was ferocious and severe! But there's this double contradiction. For Pasolini, homosexuality represented a kind of revolutionary act. For me, however, there's a kind of normality *within* normality. What interests me is the relation between man and woman, in which there are multiple possibilities for protest against society. So it's normal, but it also has to be something different. It's there that I'm looking for something that is beyond normality, beyond repetition, beyond violence. This is the big difference between me and Pasolini.

This is also involved when people ask why I don't look for new and different themes. What I'm trying to do is get as deeply as possible into these themes which are really universal. The relation between man and woman, at all its levels, at the moment of truth, reveals what one is. So there are liberating elements here; they aren't secondary, they're extremely important. People can use these images however they want; but for me, these things will certainly return in my future films.

You said at the screening that your film was typically European. What did you mean by this?

It's a film that demands a public which is sensitized to a *cinéma d'auteur*, a sophisticated public which sees a certain value in film, which is not as concerned with popular success. In the American mentality, let's say, it's not possible to distinguish quality from the public's approval. These things don't always go together, however. In Europe, partly from tradition and partly from history, there's still a way to approach a kind of universality

but which leaves popular approval out. I'm trying to deal with man and his problems in general; it's not as if I take up these problems without realizing that I won't be able to reach everyone. There is also an audience in the United States, naturally, which is more respectful and more attentive to this kind of cinema.

It seems to me that your films of the last ten years are much less plotted, that you are trying to express yourself more on a figural and visual level than through narrative and character.

Yes, that's true. My more recent films are much less novelistic, let's say. Even because of my own cultural background, which is more novelistic—the great influence of the nineteenth-century realist novel—whereas now I'm trying to communicate directly through images. Therefore the visual discourse is becoming much more sophisticated, and more demanding than it was in the past. This obviously creates difficulties within the structures of good, narrative, conventional cinema and it creates difficulties concerning the spectator's involvement. On the other hand, I think that in order to confront—at least for me, from my point of view—certain themes, a novelistic, extremely realistic type of structure is no longer sufficient. This is also true concerning the criticism of society and of institutions, I think. We need to go further inside in order to discover motivations, origins that are deeper than those that can be conveyed through realistic structures.

But isn't it also more difficult to find money to make this kind of film?

This is one of those contradictions in which one continually lives. There's always a game between the producer and the director in which the producer is trying to move the director to an expression that is simpler, and the director is always resisting. It's an arm-wrestling match in which the producer and the director *pretend* to agree, but in reality they usually don't, because one is always trying prevail over the other. And any time you make a film it can become part of a certain journalistic game, a certain curiosity, and so the public can sometimes get interested in seeing even a difficult film. For example, *Devil in the Flesh* was very successful both in Europe in the United States, perhaps for reasons that weren't connected with what the film was really about, but this at least allows you to make other films. If I'm not mistaken, the film was almost considered pornographic in America.

Yes. Some critics even suggested that you included the fellatio scene, for example, to make the film more commercially successful.

Of course not. This very brief scene has attracted a great deal of attention, completely out of proportion to its part in the film. This is the kind of game that the media play. And sometimes, without meaning to, it can even have a positive outcome at the box-office level.

But even the more traditional love scene earlier in the film seemed very strong to me, intentionally very different from most other films.

You have to remember that cinema is representation. When you see two people making love, it has to seem natural and real. What makes a film pornography, on the other hand, is a kind of mechanical repetition. In these two most recent films, I wanted to show love-making without the usual technique of allusion or symbolization but without making it too naturalistic either. This requires not so much realism but an extraordinary amount of involvement on the part of the actors. I held the shot so long during their love-making in *Devil in the Flesh* because even in that single shot there's a trajectory, a kind of narrative of change to the point that the representation of the act of love justifies the length of the shot and of the scene. It's not a matter of a cold reprise of a sexual act that would have been merely naturalistic and therefore, let's say, pornographic. This story, both on the sound track and in the images, I thought should just be left as it was, because at the same time they were *representing* the act of love. It's a very subtle difference.

The discourse of the fiction, of the representation, is actually very similar, but not equal to, a real relation. In any case, I thought that in the scene of fellatio the representation is what prevailed in that particular scene, even though it was real. It was important to see both of the characters because both of them were in a certain sense losing their virginity. So I was forced to use a technique let's say a little more traditional in the sense that I had to shoot a shot/reverse shot so as not to neglect him in order to see only her. So I would say that even though the scene is prolonged, the style of this par-

ticular scene is very traditional in a way. But even here what I was interested in producing was not a real sexual act, but a representation of change and acceptance.

In *Devil in the Flesh* there was another "complication" in that the representation of the fellatio could only be done realistically, as it were. You see it, you have to see the erection of the penis. But I can say with absolute certainty that what interested me in this scene was not the act itself, but her happiness. She laughs, she jokes, and that's what interested me in this scene, not so much the act itself. If that's all you're looking for, you can just go get a pornogaphic video tape and see everything a lot more directly. She goes from being depressed to a sense of play, of happiness, and that was my intention.

What do you think now of your earlier films? They still seem enormously powerful and disturbing to me, and my students were quite upset when I showed them Fists in the Pocket *recently.*

Well, they belong to a personal historical phase that is of course not repeatable. Things have changed a great deal from those days, personal things as well as society and so on. That type of protest is really not possible any longer. And that's not just because I'm twenty years older, but because society itself has changed. The basic thing is not to have that attitude that so many people had then, the attitude of resignation, of acceptance. Sometimes people say that if you deal with madness and things like that, you're just trying to hide from reality. No, this society is a society that I simply don't like, but nowadays any kind of attack against it has to be indirect. It can't be frontal any longer, but requires the discovery of the reasons that that earlier type of revolution failed. For example, in Italy the terrorists, like the Maoists, were applying certain theories which were partly positive, but which didn't take social and psychological reality into account. Consequently, it became a religion, something that came from the outside, in a certain sense, thinking very simplistically for example that things would change if the economic relations changed. That's why capitalism won so easily.

How are your more recent films, say, starting with Leap into the Void, *different from your films of 20 years ago like* Fists in the Pocket *and* China is Near*? When, in* The Eyes, the Mouth, *Lou Castel goes to a theater and sees himself in* Fists in the Pocket, *what does he see?*

That particular scene is about a man who comes back to his town twenty years later, back to the places where he lived the tragedy of a family. It's the past, something that belongs to history, to mythology, to politics. In a certain sense, there's a distance, a separation from the past, as if now the problem is perhaps to go beyond *Fists in the Pocket*, to go beyond a political project which didn't give the results that one had hoped for, the project of changing society. It failed, of course, in the sense that the society didn't change. So the idea—already begun before that—was to say that there was an *internal* reality, inside us, and this is what psychoanalysis is interested in, a reality that we had neglected in those years, in the sense of a certain complexity of drives, a whole internal *world* which was perhaps the only world that could, in a society in which everything was foreseen and controlled, still somehow contain freedom. The potential at least of change, of transformation. So with *The Eyes, the Mouth* in a different way, and already in *Leap into the Void*, there is this *closing* with the past, in order to look for different paths to follow.

How does your adaptation of Pirandello's Henry IV *fit into all this?*

I would say it was more like a pause, a rest. Pirandello's text has always fascinated me, and the theme itself is very interesting, the question of fiction, madness as a refuge from reality, from mediocrity. But I collided with the literary text, which I underestimated in a certain sense. I realized during the shooting that I should have been freer with respect to the text, which was limiting me, closing me in. I think I was too respectful, too worried, you know, about adapting such a great literary work, so that I was unable to be as unfaithful with it as I should have been in order to make a film out of it.

How do you square your political views with the fact that your new film was financed by Silvio Berlusconi, the great capitalist who owns all the biggest private television channels in Italy?

In Italy nowadays the situation is such that it is no longer possible to make a film with money from the film industry itself. Basically, the only two

real financial sources left are the RAI, which is the television company run by the state, or the private television channels that are owned by Berlusconi. So you either give up working or you go to the RAI or to Berlusconi's channels. So, without being at all cynical, I go where they will let me have the most freedom to do what I want. And both the RAI and Berlusconi's channels have put themselves on the same level and use the same logic—it's all a matter of ratings now, and thus there's little difference between them and certainly no qualitative difference. The main difference is that Berlusconi cuts the films up in order to show commercials, whereas the RAI shows them intact. And this is a serious difference, of course. But the danger from both—especially since they constitute a kind of monopoly—is that they will try to force film-makers to make films that are suitable for theatrical release, but that can also be subsequently shown on television. There's no formal censorship now, but they might start talking about omitting certain scenes because there are family audiences, and thing like that. It hasn't happened yet.

But I haven't had many problems finding financing, for one thing because I work with fairly small budgets. Also, because the so-called Italian producers no longer have any hope for an Italian market, they're trying to open things up to an international audience. They need a certain number of products that can be marketed abroad. Thus the "auteurs" have the possibility of making films that can at least potentially be shown here, for example, at the Montreal Film Festival. They have an advantage because they are useful to the producers in making a profit. Producers can no longer think solely of Italy, but have to consider making films, at the very least, for a European audience. After 1992, of course, there won't be any economic borders any longer, no more customs [within the European Economic Community], and there is an economic unity that is developing that will be even more radical. So everybody is talking in terms of a European market. And also of course in terms of the great American market—for this is the grand dream of every Italian and, I think, European, producer. They're even starting to make films in English, for example, which, as far as I'm concerned, is a mistake for most directors. There are directors who can do it—fine. But just as there's an Italian style of fashion, there's also an Italian style of filmmaking, and when people go to see an Italian film, they want to see an Italian film, not something bastardized.

One final question. Have you ever received an offer from Hollywood to make a film?

(Laughter) No. This is the contradiction: Though my films don't cost very much, they still cost enough. Sometimes people have suggested that we "Americanize" a film by asking this or that American actor to join us. For various reasons, this has been impossible. Ideally, I would like to make a completely Italian film, in which my specific national identity remained, because this is what enriches a film. It gives it its most original character. I've often used French actors in my films, but even there the ideal thing would be to make an Italian film with them. It would also depend on the story, on the cost. What I've never been able to do, probably through my own fault, is to assemble a company of actors; I've always had different actors in all my films. Some day, I'd like to work with a group of actors the way Ingmar Bergman does; it's extremely important to have actors whom you know and whose capabilities you know. Instead, I feel rather dispersed right now. We'll see.

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Reviews

The Big Parade

Director: Chen Kaige. Script: Geo Lilli. Photography: Zhang Yimou. Music: Qu Xiaosong and Zhao Quiping. China Film Import-Export Co.

In 1984, a young film director, Chen Kaige, in collaboration with a young cinematographer, Zhang Yimou, made a film called *Yellow Earth*—a remarkable achievement which ushered in a new era in the development of Chinese cinema. The team continued to collaborate and in 1985 completed their second film, *The Big Parade*. Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, more and more artists in China have begun to explore social aspects in their works. Likewise, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou apporach the cultural and social reality of China in both films. However, Chen Kaige and Zhang Yimou's choice in their films is to send social messages through cinematic language rather than story-telling. Just as the rich cinematic language of *Yellow Earth* greatly deepens the meaning of the film, the ingenious visual design of *The Big Parade* provides telling hints of what is left unsaid in the film's story.

The Big Parade is about the military training for the 35th anniversary parade commemorating the founding of the People's Republic of China, focusing on a small group of trainees. Unlike an ordinary narrative film, *The Big Parade* does not have a central character, but, as the plot unfolds, a number of characters are almost equally developed. *The Big Parade* is not the story of an individual but of a collective or rather of the relationship between the individual and the collective. Like most recruits in the Chinese army, the soldiers in the small unit are largely taken from villages and have very little education, and only a few are high school graduates from the cities. During the harsh training process, the soldiers from the country all endure grim trials without a word of complaint; one of them does not even go back home to his mother's funeral for fear of not completing his training assignment. The soldiers from the cities, however, are clearly different in their attitude. One of them fantasizes about a romantic encounter during this rigorous training process, and another even protests openly against the inhumaneness of this training. Nevertheless, as the unit leaders inculcate the spirit of collectivism, every soldier finally overcomes his personal problems and the whole unit succeeds in completing the training. The film culminates in the grand parade on Tiananmen Square. The grandeur and magnificence of this event—the glorious embodiment of the spirit of collectivism—naturally reduces to naught any notions of individualism.

It would appear that the storyline of the film is simply cliched propaganda for collectivism, but a careful examination of the visual imagery will enable us to perceive the underlying message. First of all, the opening shot of the film is a low-angle extreme long shot of a huge parade ground with soldiers training. As the shot fades in, the camera begins to move slowly forward to reveal more and more of the same ground, thus underscoring its spaciousness, while the angle and distance of the shot make the figures of the soldiers appear so tiny that they form a striking contrast with the huge parade ground. Moreover, as the camera continues to move forward, it also slides up and down, seemingly creating a sense of pressure. Therefore, in this opening shot, the silent image actually suggests a

The Big Parade

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general environment in which collectivism overwhelmingly prevails over individualism. Beside the opening shot, there are many other low-angle long shots throughout the film of soldiers being trained on the parade gound, suggesting a very similar feeling. In some extreme long shots, the formations of the soldiers appear just like dark blocks or thick somber lines in the distance; individualism is thus completely submerged in the collective.

Characters in the film are not exclusively presented in long shots, however; we can certainly find many close or medium-close shots of soldiers in the film. Yet, the soldiers in these close or medium-close shots are often filmed from strange angles so that their faces or bodies are in one way or another distorted. Just as individuals have to sacrifice themselves for the honor of the collective, the repression of individuality is visually suggested.

Moreover, before the soldiers fall in for their daily training, we are sometimes presented with a series of shots of them preparing for their drill. As these shots are mostly close-up and rapidly edited together, the sequence of the soldiers' quick actions appears machine-like, perhaps, reflecting a highly collectivized life-style. When a soldier from the city protests against the rigors of the training, his complaint seems to give verbal expression to this visual design. In a very ambiguous long shot of the parade ground, we do not see a single soldier, but instead, hundreds of guns lined up, symbolically replacing the soldiers; the significance of the soldiers seems to be no greater than that of guns. Throughout the whole film, visual images often convey subtle nonverbal messages in this way.

Ambiguous as the image may be, the story is always as obvious as a sermon. Toward the end, when the unit commander is about to leave, he makes an emotional farewell speech to his soldiers, praising them for having overcome personal difficulties during the training: some soldiers postpone their weddings; some break with their girl-friends; some do not go back home to family funerals. What an honorable spirit of collectivism! Then the commander concludes his speech with a passionate remark: a real man does not shed tears easily, but, when you march on Tiananmen Square, you will *all* shed tears!

The commander's emotional speech is immediately followed by the climax of the film—the big parade on Tiananmen Square which is actually the most grandiose scene in the whole film and also one that embodies the glory of the collective apotheo-

Subversive Pleasures
Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film
Robert Stam

The first extended application of Mikhail Bakhtin's critical methods to film, mass-media, and cultural studies. Robert Stam explores issues that include the "translinguistic" critique of Saussurean semiotics and Russian formalism, the question of language difference in the cinema, issues of national culture in Latin America, and "the carnivalesque" in literature and film — from Rabelais and Jarry to Vigo, Bunuel, Mel Brooks, and Monty Python. *Subversive Pleasures* is a dialogue with Bakhtin's work, here extended in its implications to cultural areas about which Bakhtin himself rarely if ever spoke.

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sized by millions of self-sacrificing individuals. With all the grandeur and power of this big parade, how could one fail to feel proud of one's own nation and its great strength, especially when one recalls all the humiliations China has endured over the past hundred years and more? The commander is right: on Tiananmen Square, everybody will shed tears!

Nevertheless, the film's final climax is not the real conclusion. The exciting scene of the big parade is followed by a simple, quiet image in the final shot: the rising sun in the background and a soldier with a gun in the foreground. Simple as the image is, it is in fact the richest and most significant one of the whole film. Preceded by the magnificent parade, the splendid rising sun in the background can definitely be seen as a symbol of the glory of the nation, and the heroic soldier in the foreground a representative of thousands of soldiers who dedicated themselves to selfless service for the nation. However, as the rising sun is in the background, the soldier facing us in the foreground is completely dark and his features are therefore obliterated, seemingly reemphasizing, at the end of the film, the price to be paid for the honor of the collective; each individual has to sacrifice his individuality just like this soldier with his face obliterated. After the excitement over the glory of the collective subsides, a more philosophical question occurs to us: if each individual has to sacrifice his individuality for the glory of the collective, then what does this glory add up to? And, in order to make the collective great, can we really not find some other way than the ruthless repression of individuality? A careful viewer may notice that the first image of the film is a large group of soldiers in extreme long shot while the final image of the film is a single soldier in a close shot. If this difference is a subtle change in the film, then the tumultuous currents of social reform mark a radical shift in Chinese society today. If we place the final image of the film within the context of present-day China where an enormous social upheaval is taking place, could we not regard the rising sun in the background as the dawn of the dark soldier in the foreground as well as of millions of individuals that he represents and whose individualities have all been long repressed?

ZHANG JIA-XUAN

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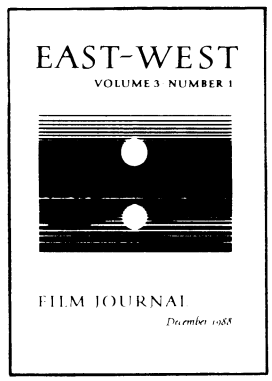

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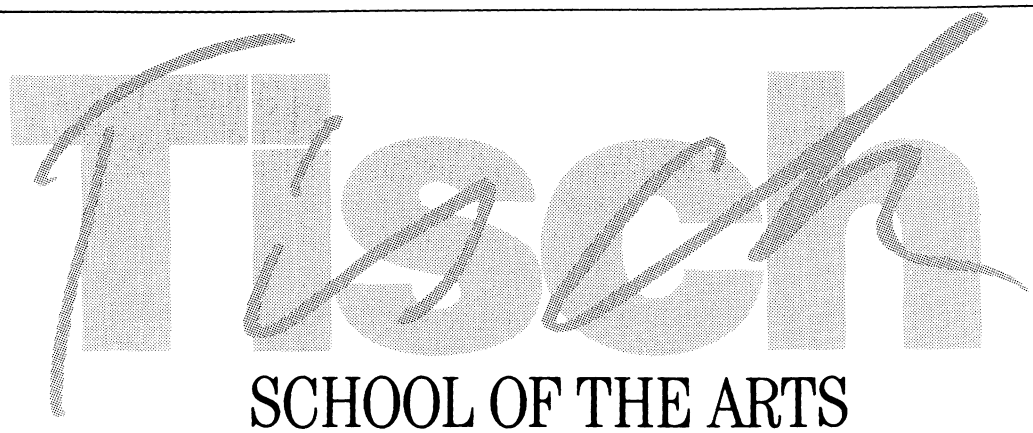

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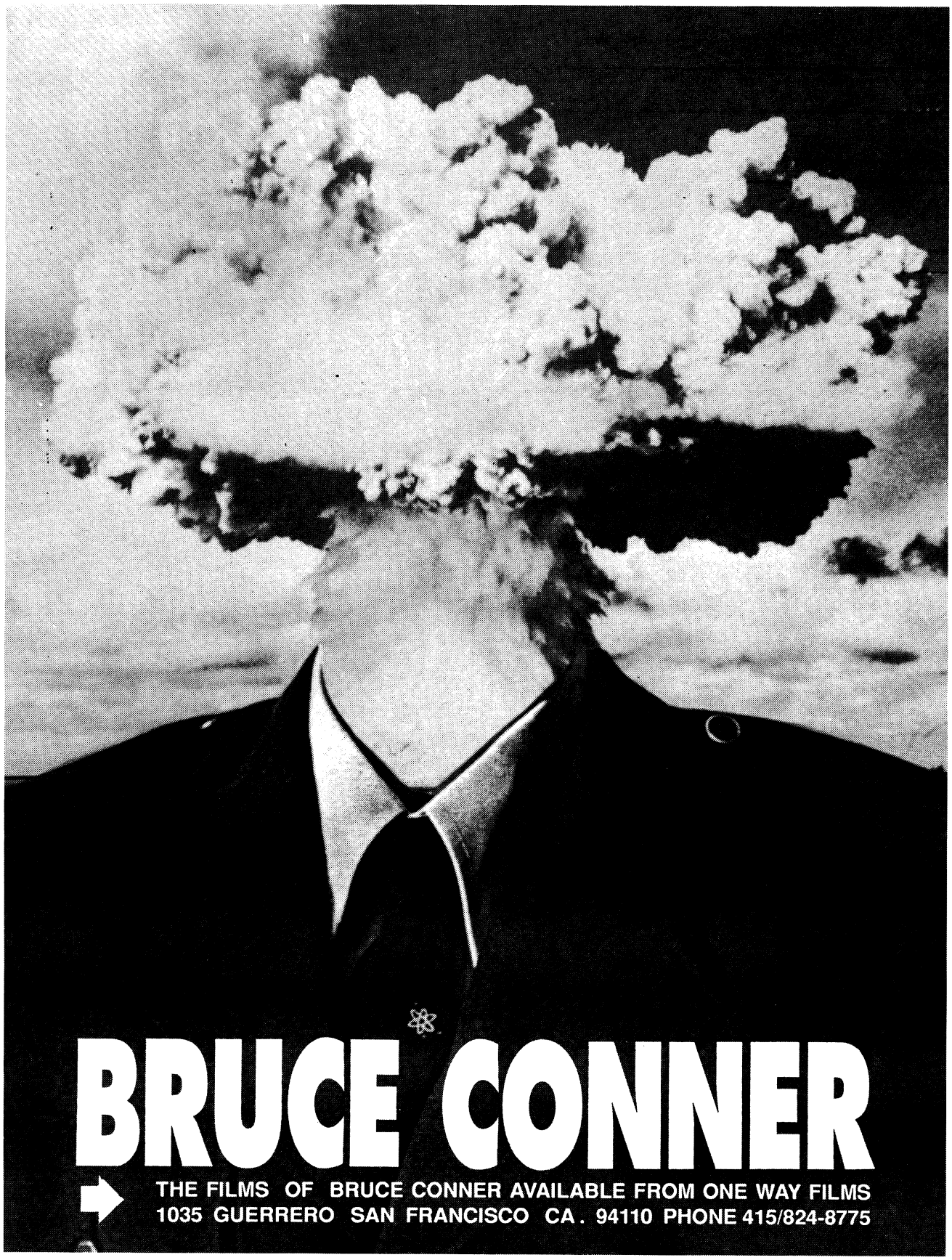
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